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

THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

Dydd Mercher, 22 Chwefror 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

CABINET

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held in Virtually via MS Teams (if you would like to view this meeting please contact michelle.hicks@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk) on Dydd Mercher, 1af Mawrth, 2023 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 rybudd os dymunwch wneud hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais am hynny

2. YMDDIHEURIADAU

Derbyn unrhyw ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb.

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg a byddwn yn cyfathrebu gyda chi yn eich dewis iaith, dim ond i chi rhoi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn creu unrhyw oedi.

The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh and English and we will communicate with you in the language of your choice, as long as you let us know which you prefer. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to any delay.

3. DATGANIADAU BUDDIANT A GODDEFEBAU

Derbyn unrhyw ddatganiadau buddiant neu oddefebau.

DALEN BENDERFYNIADAU

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Ystyried penderfyniadau cyfarfod y Cabinet a gynhaliwyd ar 18 Ionawr 2023..

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11. **DIWEDDARIAD AR Y BARTNERIAETH
RANBARTHOL** 101 - 120

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GWASANAETHAU CYMUNEDOL** 121 - 158

Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Adfywio
a Gwasanaethau Cymunedol.

EITEM(AU) EITHREDIG

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

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Ystyried adroddiad Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Adfywio
a Gwasanaethau Cymunedol.

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Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Interim
Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol.

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

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

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET
SUBJECT: CABINET – 18th JANUARY, 2023
REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: Leader/
Cabinet Member - Corporate Overview & Performance
Councillor S. Thomas

Deputy Leader/
Cabinet Member – Place & Environment
Councillor H. Cunningham

Cabinet Member – Place & Regeneration
Councillor J.C. Morgan

Cabinet Member – People & Social Services
Councillor H. Trollope

WITH: Interim Corporate Director Social Services
Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
Chief Officer Resources
Chief Officer Customer & Commercial
Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships
Head of School Improvement & Inclusion
Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance
Service Manager Performance & Democratic
Press & Publicity Officer

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received for Councillor S. Edmunds, Cabinet Member for People & Education; the Interim Chief Executive; the Corporate Director of Education; and the Head of Organisational Development.</p>
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p>
	<p><u>DECISION SHEET</u></p>
No. 4	<p><u>CABINET</u></p> <p>To receive the decisions of Cabinet held on the 7th December, 2022.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the decisions be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>
	<p><u>GENERAL MATTERS</u></p>
No. 5	<p><u>CONFERENCES, COURSES, EVENTS AND INVITATIONS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the following:</p> <p><u>His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Gwent's Awards Ceremony 2023</u> <u>9th February, 2023</u></p> <p>RESOLVED that Councillor D. Bevan, Armed Forces Champion be approved to attend.</p>

	<p align="center"><u>CORPORATE AND PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO</u></p>
No. 6	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 1st MARCH, 2023</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Democratic & Scrutiny Officer.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 1st March, 2023 be approved as presented. (Option 1)</p>
No. 7	<p><u>REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING - 2022/2023, FORECAST OUTTURN TO 31ST MARCH 2023 (AS AT 30TH SEPTEMBER 2022)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted, and Option 1 be approved, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members consider and provide appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report; and • Note the forecast application of reserves.
No. 8	<p><u>CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING, FORECAST FOR 2022/2023 FINANCIAL YEAR (AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2022)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted, and Option 1 be approved, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report. • Continue to support appropriate financial control procedures agreed by Council. • To note the budgetary control and monitoring procedures in place within the Capital Team, to safeguard Authority funding.

<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>REVIEW OF THE FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Service Manager Performance & Democratic.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and, Option 1 be approved, with the proposal that future Finance and Performance reports be presented on a quarterly basis for a trial period.</p>
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>WORKFORCE STRATEGY 2021-2026</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Head of Organisational Development.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted, and Cabinet note the progress against the 2021/22 delivery plan and endorse the 2022/23 delivery plan. (Option 1)</p>
	<p><u>PLACE AND ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO</u></p>
<p>No. 11</p>	<p><u>WASTE MANAGEMENT AND RECYCLING STRATEGY REVIEW</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Service Manager Neighbourhood Services.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Place and Environment proposed an alternative Option 3, namely:</p> <p>That Members of the Cabinet note progress made to date, and approve the updated Waste Management and Recycling Strategy, incorporating the suggestions made by the Place Scrutiny Committee, namely</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review the receptacles provided to residents to ensure they are fit for purpose; and where appropriate and practical, for litter pickers to separate the waste they collect for recycling; and • That a programme of targeted engagement activity be undertaken to reach the 70% recycling target. <p>The alternative Option 3 was approved, and it was</p>

	RESOLVED accordingly.
	<u>PEOPLE AND SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO</u>
No. 12	<u>ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2022/2023 (QUARTERS 1 AND 2)</u> Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Corporate Director of Social Services. RESOLVED that the report be accepted as provided. (Option 2)
	<u>PEOPLE AND EDUCATION PORTFOLIO</u>
No. 13	<u>CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION SERVICES - QUARTER 1 & 2 2022</u> Consideration was given to report of the Corporate Director of Education. RESOLVED that the report be accepted as provided. (Option 2)
No. 14	<u>IMPROVING SCHOOLS PROGRAMME</u> Consideration was given to the joint report of the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion, and the Strategic Education Improvement Manager. RESOLVED that the report be accepted as provided. (Option 2)

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Agenda Item 5

Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

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

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **1st March, 2023**

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	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
X	x	X				01.03.23		

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 Meeting & Service Requirements - Education Cabinet Members 'Spring Meeting' with MfE&WL - Residential 2023 1st March – 3rd March, 2023

To approve the attendance of Councillor S. Edmunds, Cabinet Member – People and Education.

2023 Royal Garden Party

To nominate a representative to attend one of the Royal Garden Parties which will be held in London on the following dates:- 3rd May, 2023; 9th May, 2023

3. Options for Consideration

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

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Agenda Item 6

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.02.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 15.02.23

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **1st March 2023**

Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme – 19th April 2023**

Portfolio Holder: **All Portfolio Holders**

Report Submitted by: **Scrutiny and Democratic Officer**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance and Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
X	x	14.02.23				01.03.23		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present the Cabinet Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 19th April 2023.

2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Cabinet Work Programme is a key aspect of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and supports the requirements of the Constitution.
 - 2.2 The topics set out in the Work Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's Corporate Plan, corporate documents and supporting business plans.
 - 2.3 All Scrutiny Committees and the Cabinet Forward Work Programmes have been aligned to the Cabinet Forward Work Programme.
 - 2.4 As the document is fluid there is flexibility to allow for regular review between the Chair and the Committee.

3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 **Option 1**
To agree the Forward Work Programme as presented for the Meeting on 19th April 2023.
 - 3.2 **Option 2**
To suggest any amendments prior to agreeing the Forward Work Programme.

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Cabinet Forward Work Programme

Cabinet Meeting Date: Wednesday 19th April 2023

Report Submission Deadline Date to Liz Thomas: Friday 24th March 2023

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

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate and Performance				
Grants to Organisations	Approval To agree the Grants to Organisations.	Rhian Daly	N/A	N/A
Revenue Budget Monitoring 2022/23	Budget Monitoring To provide members with an expenditure forecast at the end of quarter 2 across all portfolios for 2022/23.	Rhian Hayden	Corporate Overview and Performance - 16.03.23	N/A
Forecast Capital Expenditure 2022/23	Budget Monitoring To provide details of each portfolio's forecast capital expenditure against allocation at the end of quarter 3.	Rhian Hayden	Corporate Overview and Performance - 16.03.23	N/A
Review of the Agile Working Policy	Performance Monitoring To consider progress of the Agile Working Policy.	Andrea Prosser	Corporate Overview and Performance - 16.03.23	N/A
Portfolio: Place and Environment				
Highways Maintenance Plan	Decision To approve the Highways Maintenance Plan.	Clive Rogers	Place Scrutiny Committee – 14.3.23	N/A
Portfolio: Place and Regeneration				
Brynmawr Placemaking Plan	Decision To approve the proposals for placemaking in Brynmawr.	Ellie Fry	Place Scrutiny Committee – 14.3.23	N/A
Abertillery Placemaking Plan	Decision To approve the proposals for placemaking in Abertillery.	Amy Taylor	Place Scrutiny Committee – 14.3.23	N/A
Portfolio: People and Education				

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) Annual Return 2019/20	<p>Performance Monitoring Members to consider the Annual Assessment from Welsh Government which highlights Blaenau Gwent's performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards.</p>	Lynn Phillips	Partnership – 28.03.23	N/A
Education Directorate End of Year 2021 report	<p>Performance Monitoring To provide Members with the first annual strategic overview report from the Corporate Director on progress made and key areas for future development.</p>	Lynn Phillips	People – 18.04.23	N/A
Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan 2022/23	<p>Decision Members to approve the draft EAS Business Plan for 2022/23.</p>	Lynn Phillips	Partnership – 28.03.23	N/A

Agenda Item 7

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.02.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 15.02.23

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **1st March 2023**

Report Subject: **Draft Commissioning and Procurement Strategy 2023/28**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Steve Thomas - Leader / Cabinet Member Corporate Overview and Performance**

Report Submitted by: **Bernadette Elias – Chief Officer Commercial and Customer**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance and Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
18/01/2023	19/01/2023	14.02.23			02/02/23	01/03/2023		SCCB 19/12/2022

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 For Members of Cabinet to consider and approve the Council's draft Commissioning and Procurement Strategy 2023/28.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The ways in which local government organisations procure is changing in line with imminent legislative reforms to include a stronger focus on economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being outcomes being considered for each procurement process. The Council as a public sector organisation must continue to be prudent, look to deliver value for money, whilst also seeking to ensure that we are delivering sustainable outcomes that benefit the communities it serves.
- 2.2 This draft Commissioning and Procurement Strategy 2023/28 ("the Strategy") promotes and supports effective commissioning and procurement across the whole organisation. It will assist all internal officers to better understand their roles and responsibilities and provides the basis for interaction with key stakeholder groups including suppliers, elected members and the wider public.
- 2.3 In particular, the Strategy places an increased emphasis on the delivery of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being objectives relating to progressive procurement, such as Social Partnership working, Foundational and Circular Economy, Decarbonisation and is a key driver in delivery of the Council's Commercial Strategy and business minded approach.
- 2.4 The Strategy at Appendix 1 to this report, builds upon the Council's previous procurement strategy and sets out the Council's commissioning and procurement priorities through to 2028 and the changes that it will make to improve the management of its external spend on goods, services and works.

2.5 The Strategy, is focused on the delivery of four broad over-arching organisational procurement objectives:

- Ensuring legal compliance and robust and transparent governance;
- Promoting socially responsible procurement activities and processes:
 - Increasing community and social value benefits delivered by suppliers;
 - Contributing to the Council's aim to be a Net Zero Council by 2030;
 - Improving Fair Work & Safeguarding practices within our supply chain;
- Securing value for money and managing demand through effective and robust contract management arrangements;
 - Making procurement spend more accessible to local small and medium sized businesses and third sector organisations;
- Promoting innovative & best practice solutions.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 The Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee recommended Option 1 at its meeting on 2nd February 2023.

3.2 Option 1 - That Cabinet considers and approves the draft Commissioning and Procurement Strategy 2023/2028.

3.3 Option 2 – That Cabinet suggests recommendations for improvements prior to approval of the draft Commissioning and Procurement Strategy 2023/2028.

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

4.1 The Strategy 2028 supports the priorities and well-being objectives within the Corporate Plan and Commercial Strategy as well as the requirements of the draft Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

5.1.1 Whilst there are no direct costs associated with the adoption of the Strategy, the Council currently spends approximately £130m per annum with other public, private and third sector organisations on the goods, services and works required to deliver its services.

5.1.2 The Strategy, therefore. provides a clear direction and framework for the Council's commissioning and procurement arrangements, in terms of securing value for money and continuing to achieve savings from the Council's external spend supporting the Bridging the Gap Programme and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

5.2.1 There is a risk that without a clear and published set of Commissioning and Procurement priorities, governance arrangements; budgetary allocations; service planning and decision making could be adversely affected.

5.3 ***Legal***

5.3.1 The Strategy, has been drafted to take account of anticipated legislative changes:

- Draft Procurement Reform Bill (2022);
- Draft Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill (2021);
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015;
- Wales Procurement Policy Statement (2021)

5.3.2 It is proposed to review the draft Strategy during 2024/25, to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and adequately reflects the final Bills following their adoption into UK law.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

5.4.1 There are no specific staffing or workforce implications as a result of the Strategy. However, 3rd party spend is relevant to all service areas and the commercial and procurement team will continue to provide appropriate advice and guidance.

6. ***Supporting Evidence***

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

6.1.1 The Strategy, contains a number of qualitative and quantitative performance measures that will be monitored and reported on a regular basis as part of the business planning arrangements.

6.1.2 On-going performance will also be scrutinised by the Strategic Commercial and Commissioning Board, which approves the annual commissioning & procurement plans and provides robust 'check & challenge' on all procurements above £75k.

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

6.2.1 The Council recognises that an effective commissioning and procurement strategy is fundamental to achieving organisational success as it will:

- have a direct impact on overall spend, savings, value for money and the cost of service provision to the people of Blaenau Gwent;
- help shape the delivery of services to meet the needs of citizens, communities and customers;
- contribute to the achievement of corporate and service objectives; and
- be part of the process of delivering key policy objectives.

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

6.3.1 The Strategy, has been shared with Trade Union colleagues, who have provided comment, with Wales Government Social Partnership Unit for comment and has been presented to the Strategic Commercial Commissioning Board.

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

6.4.1 The Strategy, has been produced in anticipation of legislative change and to support Council's commitments in key policy areas including Decarbonisation, Social partnership and Commercialisation.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The Strategy, supports all service areas and therefore impacts on a number of preventative workstreams.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

6.6.1 The Strategy, supports collaborative and partnership working. The Council's Commissioning and Procurement teams are active members of several regional and national networks, designed to develop and share best practice and ensure that our sourcing activities focus on economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being outcomes.

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

6.7.1 The Strategy, is applicable to all of the Council's third party expenditure and supports all service areas in terms of their commissioning and procurement activities.

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

6.8.1 The Strategy, acknowledges the Council's decarbonisation priorities, with the aim to embed procurement processes that supports the Council's Net Zero ambitions to address climate change.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment***

6.9.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken and no negative impact on the protected characteristics has been identified.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Strategy, contains a number of qualitative and quantitative performance measures that will be monitored and reported on a regular basis as part of the business planning arrangements.

7.2 On-going performance will also be scrutinised by the Strategic Commercial and Commissioning Board, who approves the annual commissioning & procurement plans and provides robust 'check & challenge' on all procurements above £75k.

7.3 In accordance with the Social Value Public Procurement Bill, the Council will publish an annual procurement report at the end of each financial year. The report will include:

- A progress report on the implementation of the Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy Delivery Plan.
- A summary of the contracts awarded above PCRs 2015 Thresholds.
- A summary of the extent to which Council contracts contributed to improving well-being in Blaenau Gwent.
- A statement of the how the Council intends to further improve the delivery of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being.
- A summary of the procurement the Council expects to carry out in the next two financial years.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 Draft Commissioning & Procurement Strategy 2023/28*

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Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

**Commissioning and Procurement
Strategy
2023 - 2028**

DRAFT

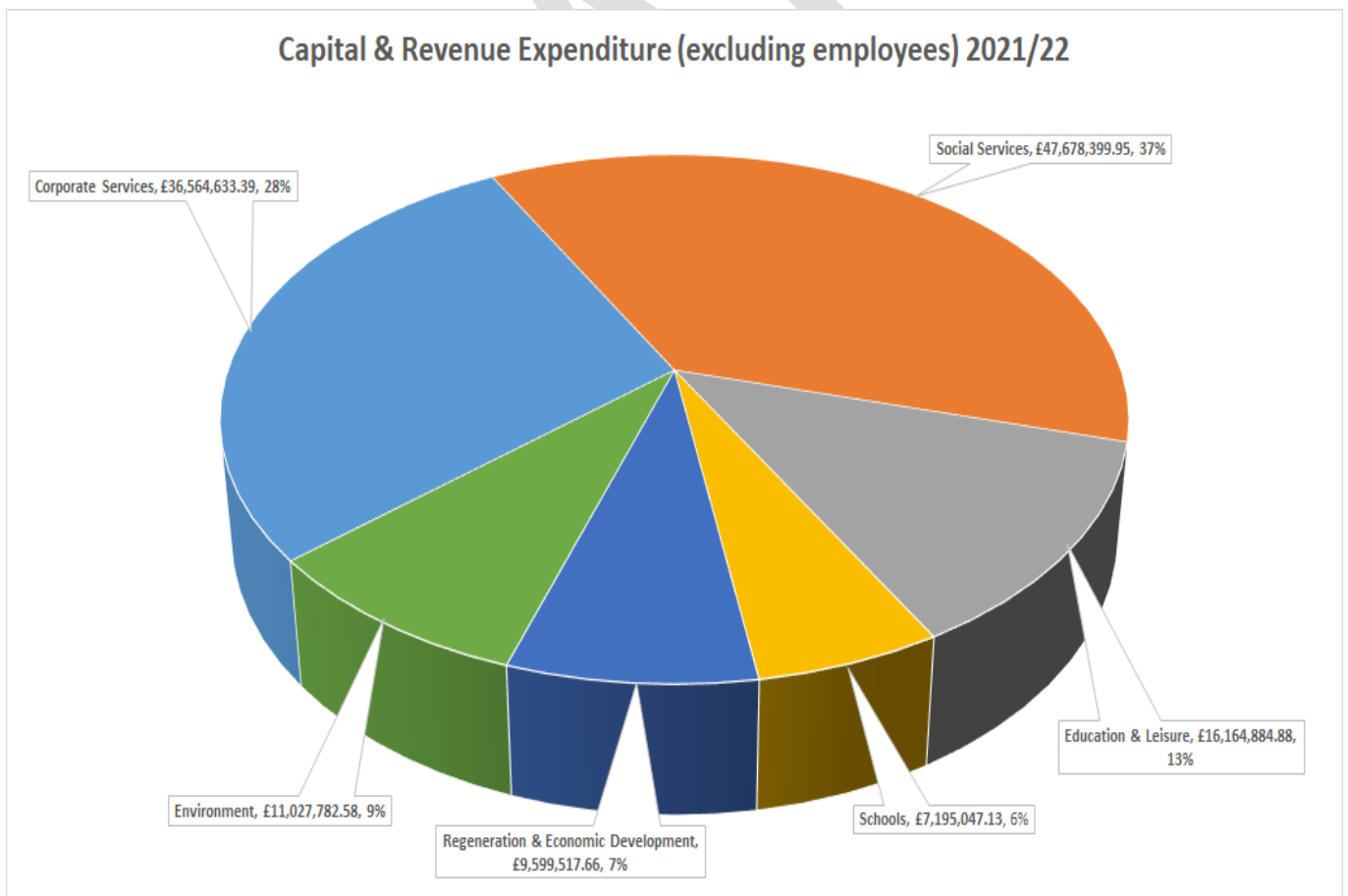
INTRODUCTION

Blaenau Gwent is a place like no other. At the head of the Gwent Valleys – Blaenau Gwent provides a unique environment to live, work and play. Blaenau Gwent is a place of heritage and dramatic change, with a sense of its past but its eyes firmly on the future.

Like the rest of the world, Blaenau Gwent has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. As we look to recover from the impacts of Covid-19, we want to utilise the Council’s annual spend of approximately £130m to support the local and regional economy. Our first Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy puts delivering economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being at the heart of what we do. The Council recognises that procurement will be one of the key tools that enables the Council to deliver its strategic priorities and in ensuring that the Council buys the right thing at the right time for the right price.

Our Procurement Strategy for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (2023-2027), contributes to the Welsh national vision for procurement, the main principles of which are set out in the [Wales Procurement Policy Statement 2021](#) and also supports the Council’s [Corporate Plan 2022-2027](#) and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Procurement Spend



Purpose of the Strategy

“Maximising the Socially Responsible Blaenau Gwent Pound £”

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council currently spends in the region of £130 million a year with other public, private and third sector organisations on the goods, services and works needed to deliver public services. It is the Council’s responsibility to manage this money efficiently and effectively to achieve Council objectives. The purpose of this strategy is to set out how we are undertaking procurement and commissioning within the Council and to provide the vision and strategic direction necessary to better achieve our objectives.

This strategy is aimed at promoting effective commissioning and procurement across the whole organisation. It will assist all internal officers who are involved in commissioning and procurement to better understand their role in supporting the delivery of this strategy. It also provides a basis for interaction with other key stakeholder groups; primarily our suppliers, the wider public and elected members.

The strategy has been developed with a full appreciation of the complex regulatory framework within which procurement and commissioning operates. It also recognises that it is an area with high risks – with potentially significant impacts on service delivery, financial management and legal compliance, as well as the overall reputation of the Council.

This strategy sets out key principles which are there to help guide all our procurement and commissioning activity and ensure that it is undertaken legally, fairly and transparently, with a proper understanding of the impact on our local communities – now and into the future – and in accordance with the Council’s ethical principles.

Our Vision

We are committed to transforming the procurement of goods, services and works to maximise its contribution to the delivery of social value, and the development of the local and national foundational economies. Through focused commissioning and procurement, we will help to make Blaenau Gwent a community which maximises learning and skills for all, embraces environmental change, supports economic business growth, works in partnership to provide high quality services to meet local needs and improves the quality of life and well-being within the community.

Our Mission

Our mission is to support the Council in the effective delivery of its Corporate Plan and Wales National Procurement Policy, by focusing on the delivery of professional commissioning and procurement activities to help make Blaenau Gwent a better place in which to live, work and play.

SCOPE & DEFINITION

What is Procurement?

For the purposes of this strategy, we have used the same definition of procurement as detailed in the Wales Procurement Policy Statement:

“The process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment”

And acknowledge that:

“Welsh public sector procurement is a powerful lever with ability to affect sustained change to achieve social, economic, environmental and cultural outcomes for the well-being of Wales”

Accordingly, a key part of our procurement & commissioning activities will be to ensure that when sourcing goods, services and works the Council supports its suppliers to:

- reduce their carbon emissions
- deliver social value
- adopt sound ethical working practices
- comply with employment best practice and legislation; and
- recognises Trade Unions

and

- discourages and seeks to eliminate any illegal practices such as modern slavery and people trafficking

What is Commissioning?

Commissioning of public services is about public sector agencies working with purchasers, providers and most importantly, communities, to identify and understand end users’ needs so that services can be designed to meet them. This is done by working within a structured and planned process called the commissioning cycle (see below), which ensures services are improved and developed against past experience and current community need.

The Commissioning Cycle



Good commissioning is underpinned by the following principles:

1. Understand the needs of those using the service
2. Consult provider organisations when setting priorities
3. Put outcomes for users at the heart of the process
4. Map the fullest practical range of providers
5. Consider investing in the provider base
6. Ensure contract processes are transparent and fair
7. Ensure long-term contracts
8. Seek feedback to review effectiveness of the commissioning process

Where Council services directly impact upon communities and influence the day to day lives of citizens, such as in the field of social care, service areas will use the commissioning cycle to develop specific strategies and plans which adhere to the eight principles of good commissioning.

Progressive Procurement

The Procurement landscape in the public sector has changed dramatically over the last 2 years. A Welsh Government report published in March 2021 acknowledges that despite the unprecedented challenges facing the Welsh public sector through Brexit and Covid-19, Procurement has risen to the challenge and through effective leadership and collaborative working has accelerated its progress in the [Procurement Evolution](#) journey in Wales. Brexit has had a significant impact on the supply chain and the economy in which our Procurement will be constantly reviewed. During the coming years, Procurement decisions will be further impacted by Welsh Government reforming the procurement legislation in Wales. The Covid-19 crisis has required public bodies including Blaenau Gwent to increase its collaborative efforts to ensure that effective and efficient procurement delivers value for money and that vital supplies are provided in a timely manner.

The Commercial Service Team have reflected on the following policies and practices to lead to the development of this strategy.

- The [Well-Being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) and the refreshed [Wales Procurement Policy Statement 2021](#) remain important drivers to deliver further well-being benefits for the people of Blaenau Gwent through the supplier selection and award of contracts.
- The Welsh Government are proposing the introduction of legislation on [Social Partnership and Procurement](#) to ensure fair work outcomes for all by delivering socially responsible Procurement.
- The [Social Service Wellbeing Act 2014](#) provides the legal framework for improving the well-being of people who need care and support, and carers who need support, and for transforming social services in Wales.
- The Council's pledge of a [Climate Emergency](#) has placed additional responsibility on the role of procurement within the Council and in delivering on these important agendas.
- The principles of [Welsh Government's Circular Economy Strategy](#) will ensure a greener, fairer and more prosperous community.
- The [Foundational Economy](#) directs public bodies in Wales to focus on services and products that keep us safe, sound, and civilised.
- Public bodies in Wales are expected to commit to Welsh Government's Ethical Procurement with reference to the [Code of Practice](#). Which includes obligations under Modern Slavery Act. Full account will be taken of the Welsh Language Act when procuring and delivering services.









- There is an ongoing consultation period by Welsh Government on the impact of the pending [Procurement Reform Bill](#) that will replace the existing Public Contract Regulations 2015. The Bill, which is expected to come into force during 2023/24, is intended to create a simpler and more flexible sourcing system, that brings greater transparency thought out the commissioning cycle and opens up public procurement to new entrants, small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) and social enterprises.
- Collaborative Working underpins future progress in public service procurement and delivery. Local Authorities are encouraged to seek collaborative opportunities with other members of the Welsh Local Government Association [WLGA](#) network and to embrace regional working where it makes economic sense to do so.

BLAENAU GWENT’S CORPORATE PLAN 2022-2027

Blaenau Gwent – a place that is fair, open and welcoming to all by working with and for our communities.

The Council’s Corporate Plan 2022/27, sets out an ambitious programme of activity for the Council over the next five years and beyond. The priorities, also referred to as Well-being Objectives, have been developed in order to support our communities to thrive. The people of Blaenau Gwent are at the heart of all that we do and the Corporate Plan is the Council’s commitment to the communities of Blaenau Gwent to provide modern and high quality services which support economic growth and well-being.

The Plan sets out the Council’s four priorities and detailed sub-priorities for action:

Priority		Outcome
	Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent	An increase in the resilience of the community, providing high quality educational and skills opportunities to create a thriving economy from birth onwards, minimising dependence and maximising independence
		
	Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities	Blaenau Gwent Council greatly reduces its carbon emissions, provides an environment which supports growth and well-being and connects communities
		
	An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place	Blaenau Gwent Council works in partnership to provide high quality services to meet local need, and improve the quality of life and well-being within the community
		
	Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient	An increase in the resilience of Communities, where everyone is welcome and safe and which minimises dependency and maximises independence
		

How effectively we spend our money will have a direct impact on our ability to deliver our ambition and priorities. Thus, the Council recognises that an effective commissioning and procurement strategy is fundamental to achieving organisational success and is instrumental in the delivery of the Corporate Plan, as it will:

- have a direct impact on overall spend, savings, value for money and the cost of service provision to the people of Blaenau Gwent;
- help shape the delivery of services to meet the needs of citizens, communities and customers;
- contribute to the achievement of corporate and service objectives; and
- be part of the process of delivering key policy objectives.

DRAFT

Ambitions and Delivery

How Commissioning and Procurement will support the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2027

The Council's four (4) Organisational Procurement Priorities set out how the Council's procurement activity will contribute towards improving local economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets out the important role that procurement has in delivering well-being goals. The draft Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill states that the Council "*must set and publish objectives designed to maximise its contribution to achieving the socially responsible procurement goals.*"

Embedding Social Value

- We actively seek to address the seven Well-being Goals and Five Ways of Working from the [Well-Being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).
- We will embrace the opportunity presented in the refreshed [Wales Procurement Policy Statement 2021](#) to deliver further well-being benefits for the people of Blaenau Gwent through the supplier selection and award of contracts.
- The Council's pledge of a [Climate Emergency](#) has placed additional responsibility on the role of Procurement within the Council and in delivering on these important agendas.
- We will start to include the principles of [Welsh Government's Circular Economy Strategy](#) which will ensure a greener, fairer and more prosperous community in Blaenau Gwent.
- We support the development of the [Foundational Economy](#) in Blaenau Gwent which encourages us to develop new and existing supply chains to bid and to be successful in future council contracts.
- We will ensure as many of our suppliers and providers commit to Welsh Government's Ethical Procurement with reference to the [Code of Practice](#).
- We will continue to consult with Welsh Government on the proposed introduction of legislation on [Social Partnership](#) to ensure fair work outcomes for all and in our ongoing aim to deliver socially responsible Procurement.
- We will continue to consult with Welsh Government on the potential [Procurement Reform](#) to minimise the impact on our local supply chains.
- We will ensure [Community Benefits and/or Social Value](#) Themes Outcomes and Measures (**TOMs**) are considered within all sourcing strategies to maximise the delivery of social value for our local communities.

Objective 1: Ensuring legal compliance and robust and transparent governance



Aim

- Ensure Council staff have awareness of, and comply with, relevant legislation and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

We will do this by

- Ensuring staff involved in the procurement process have the required skills, knowledge and tools to work effectively.
- Learning and development of Procurement staff and wider staff across the Council to ensure upskilling in commercial awareness and understanding and implementing new policies, procedures and regulations.
- Regularly reviewing and updating procurement documentation to ensure they reflect best practice.
- Ensuring procurement documentation, processes and controls are in place to ensure compliance.
- Regularly reporting on procurement activity and non-compliance to the Strategic Commercial Commissioning Board.
- Developing arrangements that will be needed to deliver an annual report that complies with the requirements placed upon us by the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill

We will demonstrate delivery by

- Publishing an annual Procurement Report.

Objective 2: Promoting socially responsible procurement activities and processes

2.1 Increasing community and social value benefits delivered by suppliers



Welsh Procurement Policy Note [WPPN 01/20](#) advises public bodies such as Blaenau Gwent Council of Welsh Government's overarching policy objectives and how to report the outcomes in relation to social value clauses and community benefits.

Community Benefits and Social Value will be considered in all projects of more than £25k in value and mandated where contracts exceed £1m with the following policy objectives being measured and reported on:

- Training & recruitment of economically inactive people
- Supply chain initiatives
- Environmental initiatives
- Cultural initiatives
- Educational initiatives
- Community initiatives
- Retention & training of existing workforce
- Working with the 3rd Sector

Aim

- To increase the value of community and social benefits delivered through Council contracts.

We will do this by

- Considering the inclusion of Community and Social benefits on all procurements over £25,000
- Making the 'community benefit offer' of the successful tenders a contractual commitment and contract managing delivery.
- Raising awareness of community benefits internally to address any organisational culture barriers.
- Encouraging tenderers to provide employment, training and work placement opportunities.
- Reviewing community benefit implementation and adapting the approach as required. Including the use of Welsh Social Value Themes Outcomes and Measures (TOMs) as they become more embedded.

We will demonstrate delivery by

- Increasing the volume and value of community benefits delivered through Council Contracts.

2.2 Contributing to the Council's aim to be a Net Zero Council by 2030



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council declared a [Climate Emergency](#) on 28th September 2020. This included an ambition to reduce its carbon emissions to net zero, which is in line with the Welsh public sector target of 2030.

Aim

- Embed a procurement processes that addresses climate change and a circular economy approach.

We will do this by

- Support initiatives that raise the awareness on climate change and circular economy – both internally and with suppliers.
- Consider circular procurement when scoping requirements to minimise waste and energy demand.
- Increasingly use a whole life costing approach in tender evaluations.
- Allow for and encourage innovation in tender specifications to enable decarbonisation.
- Gain a better understanding of markets to have an insight of carbon usage and impact within supply chains
- Carry out deep dives into categories of opportunity and prioritisation, meaning the Council can purchase more sustainably and efficiently.
- Work with service areas to help the Council meet the Welsh Government targets for decarbonisation.
- Endeavour to include proxy measures and targets reductions within contracts that reflect carbon reductions.

We will demonstrate delivery by

- Reporting on carbon reduction through the SCCB & the Decarbonisation Board.

2.3 Improving Fair Work & Safeguarding practices within our supply chain



Aim

- To ensure that fair work principles are promoted across the Council and procurement processes increase fair work practices that help tackle poverty and inequality.

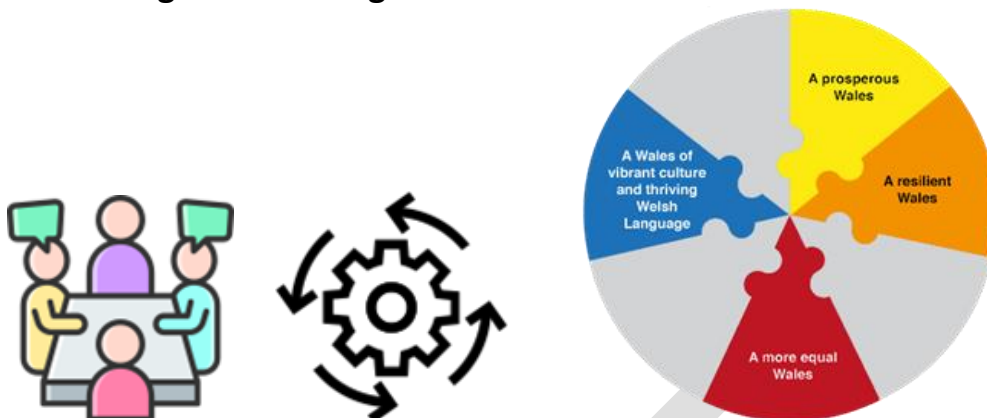
We will do this by

- Working towards the Welsh Government Fair Work Guidance including the Code of Practice: Ethical Employment in Supply Chains.
- Applying Fair Work criteria in all tenders and applying appropriate weightings.
- Encouraging contractors to provide equality training.
- Ensuring contractors know how to identify and report safeguarding concerns.

We will demonstrate delivery by

- Delivering against the 11 principles of the Code of Practice: Ethical Employment in Supply Chains.

Objective 3: Securing value for money and managing demand through effective and robust contract management arrangements



Aim

- Ensure the achievement of value for money in terms of whole life costs and quality and that we operate efficiently.

We will do this by

- Managing procurement demand across the Council and develop and promote a 'Buying Responsibly' campaign.
- Utilising regional and national framework agreements where they represent value for money.
- Embedding a robust and proportional contract management approach.
- Working with Directorates to review their spend procurement data and Contract Forward Plan to identify opportunities to manage demand and/or drive efficiencies.

We will demonstrate delivery by

- Ongoing contract management for the delivery of supplies, services or works will continue to be managed by each individual service with advice, guidance and support from the Commercial Procurement Team.
- Reporting of procurement's contribution to SCCB and via the democratic process.

3.1 Making procurement spend more accessible to local small businesses and third sector



Aim

- To ensure that procurement decisions consider how local market can best be supported.

We will do this by

- Working with partner organisations to support the development of businesses in Blaenau Gwent. This will include regular meet the buyer and training & development events; Business Wales will be engaged as a key partner in the delivery of any new contracts to provide support to local companies to give them a better chance of winning public sector contracts.
- Developing and then publicising a Selling to Council Guide to local businesses so they are clear about how to do business with the Council.
- Publish our Corporate Contracts Register on the Council's website so businesses are aware of the likely procurement opportunities.
- Simplifying our Procurement process to be more inclusive and assist smaller businesses and local suppliers to bid for contracts.
- Ensuring that lotting strategies that support SMEs are used.
- We will advertise appropriately to ensure competition, value for money and to target local interest.
- Undertaking market analysis so that informed procurement decisions can be made.
- Analyse spend data and business directories to identify opportunities to increase local supply.
- Ensure that the Council applies prompt payment for SMEs.

We will demonstrate delivery by

- Increasing the number of business accessing and being successful when tendering for Council opportunities.
- Increasing the spend with local businesses.

Objective 4: Promoting innovative & best practice solutions



Aim

- Encourage and utilise innovation where it can reduce costs and /or improve effectiveness.

We will do this by

- Reviewing the procurement forward pipeline to identify innovation opportunities.
- Ensuring early and ongoing Directorate engagement to scope and deliver their requirements.
- Challenging Directorates over existing procurement arrangements.
- Seeking examples of market innovations and best practice.

We will demonstrate delivery by

- Reporting and developing case studies to highlight best practice.

Governance and Leadership

Leadership and governance play a key part of the organisation and requires openness, transparency and integrity, performance orientation and effective collaboration. The structure for Procurement within Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is as follows:

Leadership through Cabinet Members, the Leader and Portfolio Member for Corporate Overview and Performance and Chief Officer Commercial and customer;

A Strategic Commercial Commissioning Board (SCCB), which is an officer board, chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by Corporate Leadership Team. The Board provides strategic guidance to the Commissioning and Procurement community and assesses major commercial and procurement projects. The goal of the SCCB is to ensure shared ownership for the realisation of desired outcomes and efficiencies across the Council and to ensure that commercial activities become an enabling function and that fully supports Council priorities. The SCCB will oversee the delivery of the Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy.

A Commercial Procurement Team, which sits within the Commercial Services Division of Corporate Services;

A qualified Professional Lead for Procurement who oversees Procurement activities, reporting to the Chief Officer Commercial & Customer;

Clearly defined processes and procedures along with delegation of authority in respect of procurement activities embodied in the Council's Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules;

Directorate Annual Procurement Plans – All directorates are required to produce annual procurement plans to inform the Council's pipeline of commissioning and procurement activity. The information is collated and allows early consideration of sourcing strategies to support the Council's social and commercial aspirations as well as informing the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

All Procurement and commissioning activity over £25,000 is managed via the Council's E-tender system and/or the National Procurement Website (Sell2Wales). All procurements under £25,000 are devolved to service areas for efficiency of process.

Reporting and Monitoring

The Strategic Commercial Commissioning Board will oversee the delivery of this Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy.

The Council will publish an annual procurement report at the end of each financial year. The report will include:

- A progress report on the implementation of the Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy Delivery Plan.
- A summary of the contracts awarded above PCRs 2015 Thresholds.
- A summary of the extent to which Council contracts contributed to improving well-being in Blaenau Gwent.
- A statement of the how the Council intends to further improve the delivery of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being.
- A summary of the procurement the Council expects to carry out in the next two financial years.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

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

REPORT SUBJECT: **GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS – 1st March 2023**

REPORT AUTHOR: **RHIAN HAYDEN**

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

ABERTILLERY

Abertillery & Six Bells Ward – Councillor J. Holt

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|------|
| 1. | Abertillery Operatic Society | £100 |
| 2. | Abertillery Rock and Blues Festival | £50 |

Cwmtillery Ward – Councillor M. Day & J. Wilkins

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|------|
| 1. | Bournville Social Institute | £150 |
| 2. | Chillax | £250 |
| 3. | Abertillery Orpheus Male Choir | £100 |

Llanhilleth Ward – Councillor L. Parsons

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------|------|
| 1. | Aberbeeg Community Centre | £300 |
|----|---------------------------|------|

BRYNWAWR

Brynmawr Ward – Councillor J. Hill

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|------|
| 1. | Blaina Cricket Club | £100 |
|----|---------------------|------|

EBBW VALE

Beaufort Ward – Councillor D. Woods

1.	Beaufort Christmas Lights	£100
2.	Beaufort Hill Ponds & Woodlands	£100
3.	Beaufort Male Voice Choir	£100
4.	Beaufort Hill Primary School	£150
5.	Beaufort & Rassau Scout Group	£100
6.	Ffin Dance	£100
7.	Beaufort Hearts Calonnau Cendle	£100
8.	Beaufort Tenants & Residents Association	£100
9.	Willowtown School PTA	£100
10.	Glyncoed Community Group	£180

Rassau & Garnlydan Ward – Councillor G. Davies

1.	Garnlydan Community Spirit (Retrospective Approval)*	£100
2.	One Life Autism	£100

Ebbw Vale South Ward – Councillor C. Bainton

1.	Ebbw Fawr Business Forum	£200
2.	Hope Rescue	£100

Ebbw Vale South Ward – Councillor S. Edmunds

1.	Ebbw Fawr Business Forum	£200
2.	Hope Rescue	£100

NANTYGLO & BLAINA

Blaina Ward – Councillor J.P. Morgan

1.	Blaina Cricket Club	£1,000
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Blaina Ward – Councillor L. Winnett

1.	Hope Rescue	£150
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***Those marked Retrospective Approval were paid at the request of the councillor in advance of this meeting.**

CHIEF OFFICER RESOURCES

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Agenda Item 9

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.02.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 15.02.23

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **1st March 2023**

Report Subject: **Blaenau Gwent Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) Inspection Outcome**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member People and Education**

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

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance and Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
✓	02.02.23	14.02.23			28.02.23	01.03.23		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present to Members the outcomes from the Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) Inspection and the full report is attached as Appendix 1.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 It is a statutory responsibility of the Corporate Director of Education to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of Education and produce updates for Members that forms part of the Annual Council Reporting Framework. The provision of Education is regulated under the Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) framework and this report will detail the outcomes from the inspection that took place during the Autumn term 2022.
- 2.2 In September 2022, Blaenau Gwent Council received a letter from Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, stating that the Local Authority will be subject to an Estyn inspection, in line with the Local Government Education Services (LGES) framework. The letter confirmed that the inspection would take place between 28th November to 2nd December 2022.
- 2.3 The Reporting Inspector and the LA's Link Inspector attended the People Scrutiny Committee session when this report was discussed. The LGES Inspection guidance includes the following text to explain their involvement: 'Following the publication of the inspection report, we expect that a relevant Scrutiny Committee of the local council scrutinises the report and challenges senior leaders, including officers and elected members, about their plans for improvement. At least one inspector involved in the inspection will attend this meeting as an observer but will contribute to the session where it helps clarify any matters relating to the inspection and the report'.
- 2.4 The inspection was carried out in accordance with the inspection framework and the guidance 'for the inspection of Local Government Education Services'. The three inspection areas of the LGES inspection framework are:

Inspection Area 1 – Outcomes

- Standards and progress overall
- Standards and progress of specific groups
- Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

Inspection Area 2 – Education Services and Provision

- Support for school improvement
- Support for vulnerable learners
- Other education support services

Inspection Area 3 – Leadership and Management

- Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers
- Self-evaluation and improvement planning
- Professional learning
- Safeguarding arrangements
- Use of resources

2.5 In the lead-up to the inspection, Estyn identified Blaenau Gwent's 4 Local Questions for the Inspection, including;

- 1) How well does the local authority challenge and support non-maintained settings and schools to improve?
- 2) How well does the local authority tackle inequalities in education experiences and outcomes for children living in poverty?
- 3) How well does the local authority support schools to promote respectful relationships and address negative behaviour effectively?
- 4) How well does the local authority ensure that the interests of learners are above all others in its planning for schools and other education provision?

2.6 Prior to the core inspection week, preliminary work involved surveying staff, learners, parents and other local/regional/national stakeholders with an interest in education services. There was also a preliminary visit held in early November before the core inspection week to interview key stakeholders.

2.7 The Council received preliminary feedback and findings from the Inspection team on 2nd December 2022. This was followed up by a draft and final report, which included the inspectorate findings and identified 3 recommendations for improvement. The full report also details the inspectorate's findings against the 4 local questions. This report was published on the 9th February 2023 and is attached to this report. The report provides a high-level summary of the main findings and some of the key considerations, including:

- The local authority has made good progress with its education services since it was last inspected around ten years ago as important areas for improvement have largely been addressed. Senior officers and elected members have a strong commitment to education, and this is reflected in the funding given to schools and education services.

- The local authority generally plans well to make sure that it has suitable education provision to meet the needs of every child and young person. Over the past decade, the local authority has successfully reduced surplus places in schools and improved the conditions of its school buildings. The local authority is suitably developing its Welsh-medium education provision. Whilst there have been some positive developments in provision for pupils with additional learning needs, the quality of planning for future provision is variable.
- There are many strengths in the local authority's work to reduce the impact of deprivation on education outcomes and its support for families in low-income households. There are also many strengths in the services to support children and young people's well-being and promote positive relationships.
- The authority has worked with its regional school improvement service to strengthen the challenge and support it provides to schools. This work has greater impact for children in non-maintained and primary age settings than for young people in secondary age settings. Provision for young people was too slow to improve in two schools placed in statutory categories.
- Despite strengths in education services, corporate leaders have not ensured that their vision and strategic aims for education are fully understood by other officers, elected members, school staff and external partners. Also, corporate leaders have not ensured that the corporate plan is supported by coherent delivery plans for education that include related actions and measurable success criteria. Overall, the quality of self-evaluation, planning for improvement, and performance management is not strong enough.

2.8 The inspectorate has identified 3 recommendations for improvement that the local authority will use to update its improvement plans. These areas for development take account of shortcomings identified through the inspection process. The local authority's plans are to be updated during the Spring term and the revised Education Improvement Plan (EIP) and Self-Evaluation Report (SER) will be brought back to the People Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet early in the Summer term for both scrutinisation and to seek approval. Importantly, developmental work has already begun on addressing the recommendations that are outlined below:

- R1.** Improve the corporate leadership of education services;
- R2.** Improve the quality of self-evaluation, strategic planning and performance management; and,
- R3.** Accelerate improvements in provision for secondary age pupils in schools causing concern.

2.9 The outcome of the Inspection is positive overall, progress since the last inspection has been made and there is no requirement for follow-up activity. The 3 recommendations identified can be used to facilitate leverage at a corporate level to deliver continued incremental change. However, it needs to be acknowledged that the LA's areas for improvement are of paramount importance in supporting our children and young people to improve their education, skills and life chances. There will be regular update reporting on progress to Members and the Education Directorate will work with Estyn through the Local Authority Link Inspector (LALI) termly meetings to provide assurances to the inspectorate that improvements continue to be made both corporately and operationally across the range of LGES services.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 The report has been considered by Education's DMT, the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT). The People Scrutiny Committee will consider the report at its meeting on 28th February 2023 and any feedback will be provided verbally to Cabinet.

3.2 **Option 1**

Cabinet are asked to contribute to the continuous assessment of effectiveness of BG's Education related services and offer views on improvement.

3.3 **Option 2**

Accept the report as provided.

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

4.1 It is a statutory responsibility of the Corporate Director of Education to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of Education and regular monitoring reports will be produced, in line with the Scrutiny and Cabinet Forward Work Programmes.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

There are no direct financial considerations associated with this report, however, it is pleasing to note the findings from the Inspectorate on resource management. There was acknowledgement that the LA has a track record of spending within its education budget in recent years, with relatively small underspends for the past three years against the overall education budget. The financial outlook, however, for the public sector will be challenging over the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and close financial management will be essential to achieve value for money.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

There is one corporate risk for the Education service in the Corporate Risk Register relating to the 2 Schools Causing Concern. Education also maintains a Directorate Risk Register, which is aligned to both service level and corporate risks. The risk register is reviewed as part of the business

planning process and included within the performance reporting for the service. The inspection findings are to be included in the risk registers.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 The detailed inspection findings are included within Appendix 1. The Education Directorate is working together with key stakeholders to deliver 'Better Schools, Better Citizens and Better Communities – all through a child and young person-centred approach'. The Education Directorate is working with corporate colleagues and key partners to ensure that the vision and strategic aims for education are fully understood across the board.

6.2 Expected outcome for the public

The Estyn report was published early in February and the reporting of findings provides the public with the opportunity to view progress of the LA/ Education Directorate and partners to ensure public accountability for our citizens.

6.3 Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)

The LA has shared the inspection findings with stakeholders, including Headteachers and partners. Pupil voice is a key area for the Education Directorate and examples of this are included within the inspection findings, it should also be noted that a member of the Youth Forum contributes to the work of the People Scrutiny Committee.

6.4 Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)

The report enables the Education Directorate to plan as resourcing, risk and performance is continuously reported. The Estyn findings provide a baseline of where the services are currently placed, and most importantly, where we need to be in the future.

6.5 Preventative focus

The work undertaken by the Education Directorate promotes a preventative approach to practice through early identification and intervention. The respective teams have an active rather than re-active approach to service planning can also help with planning resources and ensuring value for money services are delivered.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 The performance of the Education Directorate is monitored via through the democratic process via various reporting mechanisms including the Finance and Performance Report, the Assessment of Performance and various performance monitoring reports.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Estyn - A report on Education Services in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

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Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

A report on education services in

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

**The General Offices
Steelworks Road
Ebbw Vale
Blaenau Gwent
NP23 6DN**

Date of inspection: November 2022

by

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Blaenau Gwent has a total population of around 67,000 people, and a school population of around 9,400 pupils. There are 25 schools in the local authority, including one that provides Welsh-medium education.

The local authority works in partnership with four other local authorities in South East Wales for some of its education services, including a regional school improvement services (the EAS), a regional ethnic minority support service (GEMS) and a regional support service for learners with sensory and communication needs (SENCOM).

The Council Leader and Executive Member People & Education were both elected to their roles in May 2022. The interim Chief Executive took up post in April 2022, and the Corporate Director for Education took up post in November 2020.

In 2022-2023, the local authority's education budget is around £66,637,000. The delegated school budget per pupil in 2022-2023 is £5,697, slightly higher than the Wales average of £5,032.

The local authority's last inspection was in January 2013. Inspectors take account of a wide range of information about the local population when evaluating outcomes and the quality of education services. They consider this information alongside information about the national population. Some of the most useful information about children and young people in Blaenau Gwent is noted below:

- Over a three-year average, 31.2% of pupils aged 5 to 15 are eligible for free school meals, higher than the Wales average of 23%
- 6.1% of pupils aged 5 to 15 are from ethnic minorities, lower than the Wales average of 13.3%
- 1.8% of pupils aged 5 to 15 have English as an additional language
- 1.1% of pupils aged 5 or over are fluent in Welsh, lower than the Wales average of 15.6%
- 15.5% of pupils aged 5 to 15 have additional learning or special educational needs

Summary

The local authority has made good progress with its education services since it was last inspected around ten years ago as important areas for improvement have largely been addressed. One of the local authority's four priorities in its current corporate plan for 2022-2027 is to 'maximise learning and skills for all learners to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent'. Senior officers and elected members have a strong commitment to education and this is reflected in the funding given to schools and education services.

The local authority generally plans well to make sure that it has suitable education provision to meet the needs of every child and young person. Over the past decade, the local authority has successfully reduced surplus places in schools and improved the conditions of its school buildings. The local authority is suitably developing its Welsh-medium education provision. Whilst there have been some positive developments in provision for pupils with additional learning needs, the quality of planning for future provision is variable.

There are many strengths in the local authority's work to reduce the impact of deprivation on education outcomes and its support for families in low-income households. There are also many strengths in the services to support children and young people's well-being and promote positive relationships.

The authority has worked with its regional school improvement service to strengthen the challenge and support it provides to schools. This work has greater impact for children in non-maintained and primary age settings than for young people in secondary age settings. Provision for young people was too slow to improve in two schools placed in statutory categories.

Despite strengths in education services, corporate leaders have not ensured that their vision and strategic aims for education are fully understood by other officers, elected members, school staff and external partners. Also, corporate leaders have not ensured that the corporate plan is supported by coherent delivery plans for education that include related actions and measurable success criteria. Overall, the quality of self-evaluation, planning for improvement, and performance management is not strong enough.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the corporate leadership of education services
- R2 Improve the quality of self-evaluation, strategic planning and performance management
- R3 Accelerate improvements in provision for secondary age pupils in schools causing concern

What happens next

Following the publication of the inspection report, the local authority should update its plans to address the recommendations and to take account of shortcomings identified through the inspection process. The local authority should update its plans within three months of the publication of the inspection report.

Main findings

Outcomes

We are unable to provide a full evaluation of outcomes. This is due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused the suspension of inspections of schools and most other education providers between March 2020 and February 2022. It is also due to the lack of data about outcomes that can be compared over time as the pandemic caused changes to the way that qualifications were awarded and affected most other data that we consider when making evaluations, such as school attendance, school exclusions and post-16 learner destinations. Any evaluations that follow provide a context by reporting on outcomes before the pandemic or relate to more recent outcomes where the evidence base is valid and reliable.

Between September 2017 and March 2020, we inspected eight primary schools, one all-age school and one secondary school. Overall, inspection outcomes during this period were in line with the national average. We judged that standards were good in all but one of the primary schools. However, standards in the all-age school and the secondary school were judged to be adequate and unsatisfactory respectively, and both schools were placed in a statutory follow-up category. Although one of these schools has been removed from its category, both of these schools were slow to improve standards following their inspection. Since inspections resumed in February 2022, we have inspected two primary schools and a special school. We asked both primary schools to provide case studies of good practice, but the special school requires special measures.

In the three years before the start of the pandemic, the proportion of pupils who achieved five or more GCSEs at grade C or above including English or Welsh and mathematics varied considerably across the authority's schools. One school performed consistently well, one school performed consistently satisfactorily, one school had a worsening trend and one school performed consistently poorly.

In the school inspections between September 2017 and March 2020, pupils' well-being and attitudes to learning were judged to be good in many schools. For the three years from 2017 to 2019, overall school attendance was consistently lower than the national average. However, the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals was higher than that of their peers nationally and rates of persistent absenteeism and unauthorised absence were broadly in line with national averages, which are positive given the socio-economic context of the authority. The rate of fixed-term school exclusions of five days or less was well above the national average, although the rate of fixed-term exclusions of more than five days was broadly in line with the national average.

After Year 11, almost all young people progress to further education, employment or training. This is a particular strength given the historically high levels of young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) and given the challenging socio-economic context of the authority. Young people continue to benefit from support from dedicated officers beyond their initial destination after Year 11 that helps them to move to an alternative education, employment or training destination if their initial destination does not work out.

Children and young people currently benefit from a wide range of services to support their well-being. Children and young people aged 10 to 25 are well supported by the authority's counselling service in schools and communities which, on average, leads to considerable reductions in emotional distress. Young carers have identity cards that help to reduce barriers that can prevent them from participating fully in and benefiting from activities that their peers enjoy. Vulnerable children and young people benefit from free after school and holiday activities that develop their literacy and numeracy skills and support their personal and social development, physical health and well-being.

When given the opportunity, children and young people in the authority influence decisions that affect them. A young person is elected from the Youth Forum to be a member of the scrutiny committee that considers education matters. The voice of secondary age pupils has supported the development of helpful LGBTQ+ support groups in all their schools.

Education services

How well does the local authority challenge and support non-maintained settings and schools to improve?

Officers in Blaenau Gwent generally know their schools well and have developed a good understanding of the contexts of different schools. Following a review of the education service structure, the local authority created a dedicated senior leadership role for school improvement and inclusion. This has increased the capacity of the local authority to work more closely with schools and to link more effectively with the regional school improvement service, the Educational Achievement Service (EAS).

Officers have strengthened and improved their relationships with senior leaders in most schools. Most headteachers feel that officers listen to their views and take account of their opinions. For example, headteachers identified that pupils' reading skills are weaker following the pandemic and the local authority has commissioned the EAS to support schools to improve these skills.

The local authority and the EAS work well together to support schools. School improvement partners have a well-structured plan of work with school leaders across the academic year, starting with sessions that focus on school self-evaluation and professional discussions with key staff from the school, the local authority and the EAS. These sessions help to identify the level and nature of the support that schools will benefit from to enable them to address their improvement priorities successfully. A single plan for each school outlines the support that the school will receive, details of grant spending, school improvement priorities and termly evaluations of the progress against these. Officers implement a tiered approach to providing support to schools. When schools need additional support, officers implement the Team around the School approach to ensure a holistic approach that meets the bespoke needs of the school.

There are currently no primary schools or non-maintained settings requiring follow-up activity after inspection. Over the past two years officers have identified a few primary schools that require improvement. The local authority and the EAS have provided good support for these schools to help them to improve. This support includes

strengthening the governing body and commissioning curriculum support through the 'local network of schools' process. Where the local authority uses its statutory powers to appoint governors, it takes care to match governors' skills and expertise closely to the needs of the school.

The local authority early years team and the advisory teacher from the EAS provide the three non-maintained settings with effective advice and guidance. This includes support for evaluation and improvement planning as well as guidance on how to create a stimulating environment for young children. This support is helping the settings to deliver good quality provision for their children.

Two schools in the local authority require special measures currently, one secondary school and one special school, and one all-age school was removed from the category of needing significant improvement in February 2022. In two of these three schools, officers did not recognise important shortcomings or the need for school leaders to make significant improvements prior to these being identified by inspectors. The pace of improvement in these two schools has been too slow. Reviews of progress in these schools show that issues identified at the time of the inspections, particularly around the quality of teaching, are not being addressed quickly enough and impact on learners' progress for too long a period of time. Officers do not monitor progress closely enough or ensure that school improvement partners set sufficiently precise and focused success criteria against which progress can be measured. In a few instances where improvement partners lacked the relevant specialist knowledge and skills to be able to support and challenge schools, the local authority challenged the EAS and ensured that suitable improvement partners were put in place.

The EAS and the local authority provide a range of appropriate professional learning opportunities for staff at all levels in schools. These include national leadership programmes and training to support teaching and learning. In addition, the local authority delivers its own useful complementary programmes for aspiring and new headteachers, which helps to mitigate the challenge of recruiting experienced senior leaders to schools in the county. Recent changes to the programme to support governors means that they now access training matched better to their needs.

How well does the local authority tackle inequalities in education experiences and outcomes for children living in poverty?

The local authority has a clear commitment to reducing the impact of poverty on education outcomes. Officers know their communities well and use information they gather locally, national surveys and reports to identify needs and prioritise resources. Heads of service across the local authority have established an anti-poverty council and elected members have recently set up a cost-of-living crisis group. Elected members are committed to addressing this issue, and a new member 'poverty champion' brings knowledge and expertise to help support this aspect of their work. Members look beyond their authority to see what they can learn from others to help improve Blaenau Gwent for its citizens.

Officers collaborate well across directorates on issues relating to poverty to enable resources to be targeted towards those most in need. This is helping vulnerable families to access services where they can get suitable advice, support and practical

help. Officers work well with local charitable groups to provide support for families who are struggling financially, as well as ensuring that period poverty does not lead to educational disadvantage.

The local authority uses a wide range of approaches to help mitigate the effects of poverty in pre-school and children's early years in education. This begins before birth with support for mothers-to-be by, for example, encouraging healthy eating and developing budgeting skills. There are groups for new mothers to help with parenting, for example the 'Lap not App' programme that promotes the development of bonds and relationships. Flying Start hubs are largely within local communities to make them as accessible as possible. Within these hubs, there is holistic support for parents, including opportunities for education and training to access employment.

Officers ensure that schools spend their pupil development grants appropriately, supporting them to make well-considered decisions and challenging them on the impact of their spending. Headteachers value the support the authority provided during the pandemic. School holiday enrichment programmes provide structured childcare for children to have access to sport, craft and environmental activities. Children taking part in these programmes have a daily meal provided for them, learn to cook simple, healthy recipes and have opportunities to prepare meals for their families to dine together.

From September 2022, the local authority increased catering capacity to provide universal free school meals for all pupils up to Year 2, going beyond the Welsh Government's minimum requirements for the roll-out of free school meals at this stage. The authority works with a specialist dietician to ensure that meals are healthy and nutritious, and that they cater appropriately for an increasing number of pupils with special dietary requirements. Additionally, healthy schools co-ordinators work with schools and settings to promote healthy lifestyles, for example by promoting healthy snacks in the early years.

The authority identifies vulnerable children and young people of all ages using a range of suitable risk measures. The needs of the more vulnerable are considered by multi-agency panels. Professionals track, monitor and support vulnerable children and young people through a named support worker. These children and young people have support during important milestones, such as transition from primary to secondary schools and on to post-16 education, training or employment.

Families First funds four social workers to work with schools across clusters. This enables schools to access appropriate support quickly for pupils and families to reduce the risk of disengagement from school and learning. Recently, the authority has restarted its family engagement work following the pandemic, for example supporting pupils returning to school and those with examination anxiety.

The authority acknowledges the work of young carers in the authority and the challenges they can face. Local authority and health professionals proactively identify young carers so that can offer them suitable support. Over the past three years, young carers have been provided with a National Young Carers ID card, which gives access to a range of helpful benefits and incentives to help them and their families, such as free access to leisure facilities and permission to collect prescriptions for

those they care for. Elected members recognise and celebrate the contribution of young carers at an annual awards ceremony.

How well does the local authority support schools to promote respectful relationships and address negative behaviour effectively?

Through the education psychology service and an 'inclusive practice service', all schools have access to a range of suitable support to promote positive, respectful relationships and address negative behaviour effectively. These two services work closely together.

Officers in the education psychology service provide helpful training for school staff, including Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) training for teaching assistants. They provide valuable guidance for additional learning needs co-ordinators (ALNCos) that helps them to consider how to best meet pupils' additional learning needs.

The local authority commissions one of its special schools to provide the 'inclusive practice service' for other schools. This service provides beneficial support for staff to understand behaviours in schools and respond appropriately. It has recently modified its approach from directly supporting individual pupils to providing professional learning to school staff so that they can support pupils themselves.

The local authority has recently developed new 'positive relationships and behaviour' guidance and a 'relationships (anti-bullying)' policy, although there was limited involvement of schools and learners in developing these. The anti-bullying policy sets out the expectation that schools will record all alleged incidents of bullying, outlining the specific types of bullying, including bullying involving pupils with protected characteristics. Previously the local authority had not been collecting information about incidents from schools in a way that would enable it to identify potential issues and act upon them. The local authority has improved its work in this area by purchasing a safeguarding information management system for every school that is being used to record and report incidents and related pupil demographics at school level and collate this information centrally. It is too early to evaluate how well the local authority and its schools are using this system.

The local authority has developed an effective early identification tool, which identifies children and young people aged 7 to 25 years who may be at risk of exclusion or disengaging with education, employment or training, or becoming homeless. Through Families First and a multi-agency approach, the local authority provides helpful early support for these children and young people. Blaenau Gwent's youth service provides strong support for young people aged 11-25 who are at risk of being excluded or being not in education, employment or training (NEET). Working closely with other support services, youth workers support young people on a one-to-one basis and in groups, both in schools and in their communities. This co-ordinated approach has helped young people to remain engaged in their education and has supported a reduction in school exclusions. The proportion of young people who are NEET has reduced considerably over the last decade and young people are supported positively beyond their initial destination after Year 11.

The youth service co-ordinates a counselling service for children and young people from age 10 to age 25 that is provided in schools and community locations. This service provides helpful support for children's and young people's emotional well-being and mental health. A community psychologist provides young people with more specialist support, if necessary, where they are unable to access this through traditional routes. More recently, the local authority has established play therapy for children in Year 2 to Year 6. These services help children and young people to better understand behaviours and manage their relationships with others as well as reducing their emotional distress.

A dedicated detached youth team is used effectively to address anti-social behaviour in local communities. For example, following concerns about the behaviour of some young people in a car park outside of school hours, detached youth workers used their skills to divert young people to more suitable activities. Incidents of anti-social behaviour have reduced wherever this team has worked, and this work supports the work of schools in promoting good relationships.

The authority has very recently established a vulnerable learners panel, which involves senior leaders from secondary and all-age schools. It was established in collaboration with schools to improve the well-being of vulnerable pupils and help decrease exclusions. Early signs suggest that this panel is adding value to the existing range of services.

The range of useful support services to promote positive relationships in schools and communities means that exclusions are low in many schools, although a few schools still have high exclusion rates.

How well does the local authority ensure that the interests of learners are above all others in its planning for schools and other education provision?

Over the past ten years, or so, the local authority has been successful in both reducing surplus places in schools and improving the conditions of its school estate. The local authority has been prepared to make difficult decisions in relation to closing schools and replacing them with mergers and new builds. Where appropriate the local authority has modernised school buildings, for example through refurbishments and extensions.

The local authority has kept its school organisation policy under review and recently amended it to reflect recent developments, including the impact of the pandemic. The policy appropriately considers and incorporates national and local priorities such as its Welsh in Education strategic plan and information and communication technology (ICT) in schools. However, the engagement of headteachers in this strategy was variable and the strategy is generally not well understood. In addition, despite many appropriate actions to improve connectivity and developments in relation to ICT, there is no clear ICT strategy.

The south-east Wales regional sustainable communities for learning group was established by the local authority around five years ago and has recently been extended and includes local authorities from outside the region. The group's work currently focuses on sharing information on processes regarding the planning of

school places, standardising costs, and issues regarding sustainability and carbon neutral designs.

The key focus of the local authority's Welsh in education strategic plan (WESP) is to ensure that Welsh-medium provision is available and accessible in all three of the county's valleys. This is a sensible and pragmatic approach and is supported well by plans to increase access to pre-school and nursery Welsh-medium provision. The Welsh in education forum (WEF) comprises a broad range of partners and provides an effective steer for this work. Officers are aware of the risks in not being able to deliver the WESP's priorities and are considering appropriate steps to mitigate against these risks. The WESP's focus on improving Welsh skills of pupils in English-medium schools and expanding Welsh-medium provision in post-16 is underdeveloped. The local authority is considering working with Merthyr Tydfil and Powys local authorities to scope out the possibility of establishing a Welsh-medium secondary school to cater for the expected rise in demand during the next 10 years.

The local authority has a well-established Welsh-medium primary school in Blaina. An immersion provision is being developed at the school, which will provide additional opportunities for pupils to access Welsh-medium education. There are well-developed plans to open a seedling Welsh-medium primary school in Tredegar in September 2023. This school will also offer childcare provision and a resource base for pupils with autism.

Despite recent closer working between colleagues in education regarding the planning of provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), data is not always used effectively enough to inform long-term planning. This is illustrated by the recent decision to increase capacity at a special school by nearly 40%. The needs of children with complex special education and medical needs, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, are generally known from a very young age, so the demand for additional capacity should have been foreseen and planned for in a more timely way.

The local authority has established useful resource bases in several mainstream schools for pupils with additional learning needs. In some cases, these resource bases helped to address surplus places in the mainstream schools, but as the number of pupils in mainstream classes in these schools has increased, a few schools are now struggling for space. In 2017, the local authority undertook a very useful review of resource base provisions. This identified strengths and areas for improvement across the provisions. However, the ongoing monitoring of these provisions is inconsistent. There are very few references to these provisions in notes of visit from school improvement partners. Where they are referenced, comments made are too limited to be of any value to the local authority and rarely evaluate the impact of provision on pupils' progress.

Senior leaders have a suitable vision for inclusion and pupils with ALN. However, this is not yet supported by a clear strategy. A range of very useful policy and guidance materials have recently been shared with schools.

The local authority makes provision for pupils in out-of-county settings. Half of the pupils currently placed in out-of-county provision have additional learning needs related to their social, emotional and behavioural needs. The local authority does not

analyse its use of out-of-county settings well enough in order to understand the implications for its capacity to meet the needs of pupils locally.

Leadership and management

Leaders in Blaenau Gwent place a high priority on improving outcomes for children and young people across the local authority. The local authority has high aspirations for regeneration and education to enable all children and young people in the local area to thrive and succeed. Lead elected members and senior officers are committed to improving conditions for their community so that deprivation is not a barrier to long term success. Elected members and officers demonstrate a strong commitment to 'maximise learning and skills for all learners to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent', one of the four priorities set out in the corporate plan 2022-2027. Corporate leaders and the education directorate are beginning to refine their approaches to ensure that this commitment is translated into specific and measurable actions.

Senior leaders in the education directorate have worked with elected members and other senior officers across the council to establish a suitable vision for education. This aims to create a 'school-led, self-improving system that develops 'better schools, better citizens and better communities'. However, this vision is not communicated clearly or consistently enough by the corporate leadership team. As a result, the strategic direction for education is not sufficiently understood by all elected members, officers, or staff in schools.

Corporate leaders have not ensured that the corporate priority and directorate vision for education are coherently reflected in education plans. The corporate plan sets out how the local authority will know how well it is doing in relation to its priority for education, but the range of broad indicators in the corporate plan are not developed sufficiently into specific success criteria against relevant actions in education plans. This disconnect between corporate and education plans tempers senior leaders' ability to hold officers to account for their work and ensure an appropriate pace of improvement in identified areas. Nevertheless, the executive board, which includes senior elected members and senior officers from across the local authority, is used appropriately to hold education officers to account for progress against planned actions. In the board meetings, members challenge officers suitably.

Despite the weakness in corporate leadership, the education senior management team has developed strong working relationships with officers across the directorate and places a high level of trust in staff at all levels to deliver high quality services. Senior education managers have good oversight of most education services covered by our local inspection questions. These services have strengthened over time to better meet the needs of children and young people, and are having a positive impact on their outcomes.

The education senior management team meetings provide suitable opportunities for education leaders to monitor progress against planned activity. However, the quality of improvement planning and evaluation within the education directorate is too variable. Plans do not always include suitable success criteria, and evaluations therefore focus too often on whether actions have been completed rather than the impact they have had on improving provision and outcomes for learners. In

mitigation, senior managers have a better understanding of strengths and weaknesses in their services areas than is reflected in planning and self-evaluation documentation.

Performance management processes in the local authority are suitably established and used to support officers and hold them to account. Officers have access to monthly support sessions and regularly review progress against targets set. Despite this, performance management targets are not consistently precise enough and do not always identify the specific aspects of practice that officers need to improve. As a result, performance management processes are not aligned consistently with evaluation and improvement work, and accountability does not always focus on the most important aspects of officers' work.

There are suitable examples of officers accessing useful professional learning to improve aspects of their work, such as managing staff and supporting their well-being. However, the local authority does not have a strategic enough approach to planning or evaluating the impact of professional learning across the directorate.

The local authority has strengthened working relationships with its regional school improvement service (EAS). As a result, officers in inclusion services are working more closely with school improvement partners to provide a holistic approach to supporting schools. The local authority has recently improved the way it holds EAS to account for operational aspects of their work, for example when considering the usefulness of notes from school visits by school improvement partners.

Leaders make appropriate decisions when they are concerned about the progress of schools. For example, the authority has issued warning notices to a few schools that were causing concern and used its powers to appoint additional governors. In a few cases, the progress that schools causing concern make is too slow and the local authority is not sufficiently challenging school leaders, the work of EAS or holding its own officers to account for the impact of actions in these schools.

Elected members, through scrutiny, carry out their duties diligently. They regularly challenge and scrutinise decisions and officers respond promptly to their requests. They have a good working knowledge of the local authority and the members briefings have provided them with suitable professional learning, which has improved the way in which they hold the local authority to account for its work. However, due to the weaknesses in evaluation across the directorate, members are not always provided with a clear enough picture of the strengths and areas for improvement across the directorate. This limits their ability to hold the local authority and the EAS to account for all aspects of their work.

Officers and elected members are committed to safeguarding young people in their local authority. There is an appropriate safeguarding culture within the local authority. All officers and elected members receive suitable safeguarding training. The way in which education and children's services work together has contributed well to improving multi-agency working and the support schools receive to manage the needs of pupils and their families more effectively. The advice and guidance provided to schools by officers is valued by school leaders and helps them to respond to safeguarding concerns appropriately. Elected members are beginning to develop

their understanding of safeguarding in education and challenge appropriately the content of reports they receive.

The authority's prioritisation of education is reflected in its allocation funding for education further above its Indicator Based Assessment than most local authorities in Wales. It also increased funding to schools this year by a higher percentage than the Welsh average. The authority also budgeted for the highest spend per pupil of all authorities in Wales this year. The authority delegates a higher percentage of its education budget to schools than many other Welsh local authorities. To support the improvement of school buildings, the authority has also allocated nearly £7million of its capital funding over 2019-2025 for Band B of its 21st Century Schools programme.

The authority has a track record of spending within its education budget in recent years, with relatively small underspends for the past three years against the overall education budget. The authority is projecting a small overspend this year and understands its key current and future budget pressures for education that include energy costs and home-to-school transport.

Overall, schools' balances increased in the three years prior to the pandemic. None of the authority's schools were in deficit at the end of last year. In common with other local authorities, total schools' balances have increased significantly during the pandemic due to additional grant funding but the authority anticipates that schools' balances will reduce by the end of this year, and in future years. The authority has applied its scheme for schools' financing where schools were in deficit prior to the pandemic. In previous years, deficit reduction plans were in place for a very few schools, although some actions were appropriately not taken during the pandemic.

The authority provides a comprehensive range of service level agreements (SLAs) for a range of services it provides for schools, such as catering and cleaning. Feedback from headteachers on some SLAs was mixed when the authority surveyed schools as part of a review of SLAs last year. SLAs were revised to take account of feedback and there is subsequently a high level of take-up for 2022-2025.

The School Budget Forum is generally well attended by headteachers and engaged in helpful activity such as reviewing the schools' funding formula and SLAs. The authority makes use of comparative data to inform reviews of its school funding formula, for example the re-allocation of some funding from primary to secondary schools. The funding formula was reviewed for each of the last two years.

Many headteachers agree that the authority provides good support for schools with their financial planning and nearly all agree that the authority provides schools with good human resources support.

The authority monitors appropriately the delivery of commissioned services, and key commissioned services, including the EAS and Aneurin Leisure Trust, have been discussed at scrutiny committee.

Evidence base of the report

Before the inspection, inspectors:

- consult the local authority on the local inspection questions to be used during the inspection, based on the authority's self-evaluation, strategic plans and relevant data held by Estyn
- analyse the outcomes from open questionnaires, including the views of learners, parents, school staff and governors, local authority staff, regional consortium staff, elected members and general public
- carry out a preliminary visit to the local authority to meet with a range of relevant partners to education services, such as learner representatives, headteachers and governors, and leaders from statutory and third sector agencies working with children and young people

During the inspection, inspectors normally:

- meet with the leader of the council, elected members responsible for education services, elected members responsible for the scrutiny of education services, the chief executive, the director of education, other leaders and managers in education services, other relevant staff in the local authority, the managing director of the regional consortium for school improvement and other relevant staff from the regional consortium
- look closely at the local authority's self-evaluation processes
- consider the local authority's strategic and operational plans for improvement
- scrutinise a variety of documents, including information on learner outcomes, information on the performance of schools and other education settings, including information from the regional consortium for school improvement, minutes from a range of meetings, reports presented to council or scrutiny, information relating to the safeguarding of learners and any other information relevant to the local authority's education services held by Estyn

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection
- provide a draft copy of the report for the local authority to note any concerns with factual accuracy, and made amendments where necessary

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the local authority and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 38 of the Education Act 1997, the Children Act 2004 and the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Publication date: 10/02/2023

Agenda Item 10

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.02.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 15.02.23

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **1st March 2023**

Report Subject: **Blaenau Gwent Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2024/25**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member People and Education**

Report Submitted by: **Corporate Director of Education – Lynn Phillips
Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change – Joanne Watts**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance and Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	02.02.23	14.02.23			28.02.23	01.03.23		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to outline the outcome of the annual consultation process, in line with the revised draft of the Blaenau Gwent Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2024/25. The Cabinet is asked to consider and approve the policy in preparation for the 2024/25 admission round, prior to its-publication on the 15th April 2023.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Welsh Government's School Admissions Code (2013) dictates that Councils must review their admissions policies annually for consultation and publication by April 15th in the academic year preceding the admissions round. Blaenau Gwent School Admissions Policy outlines the arrangements, criteria and relevant legislation that underpin school admission processes and methodology, and has been drafted in line with the aforementioned Code, along with the Admissions Appeals Code (2013). The Admissions Authority must ensure that the following information is provided during the consultation process:
- i) The admission numbers for each school
 - ii) Application procedures and the timetable for the admission process
 - iii) The criteria to be applied to applications in the event that there are more applications than places for a school
 - iv) Arrangements for waiting lists and how they operate
 - v) Arrangements for the processing of late applications
 - vi) Details of how parents will be notified of a decision on their application, as well as appeal procedures should their application be unsuccessful
- 2.2 The primary changes (detailed in red within **Appendix 1**) to the policy document for the 2024/25 academic session are as follows:
- Updated consultation and application details.

- A review of the nursery, primary and secondary admission numbers in line with the annual capacity review process, which considers changes to the configuration of teaching and learning environments. This process is carried out in line with the Welsh Government's Measuring the Capacity of Schools in Wales Guidance (2011). The final agreed capacity calculations are then used to inform admission numbers detailed with the policy document.
- A review of the dates for the admission round(s), associated processing and offer deadlines.
- Updating of the policy in relation to Managed Moves, Resource Bases, Special School and Complex Placements in line with ALN reform developments and learning from the current year.
- Changes to terminology in line with ALN reform.
- Updates as requested by consultees (detailed below).

2.3 The draft Blaenau Gwent Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education (2024/25, please refer to **Appendix 1** for the policy document), was distributed to relevant consultees as outlined within Welsh Government's School Admissions Code (2013, pages 6-7) and detailed on page 2 of the appended policy consultation document. The consultation period commenced on Wednesday 11th January 2023 and concluded on Wednesday 25th January 2023. During the consultation period, 5 responses were received as follows:

- Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg requested that the policy be updated to include a comment clarifying that parents need to specify their preference on the application form as to which campus they would prefer their child to attend i.e., Tredegar or Blaina campus.
- Coed y Garn requested that the policy be amended to reflect that they offer a full-time provision for nursery only and not for rising 3's.
- St Mary's RC requested the policy be changed to reflect the fact they offer a full-time provision for rising 3 as well as nursery.
- The Early Years team requested the name of Mrs Tiggy Winkles be amended to Tiggy's Day Care as the name has changed.
- Brynmawr Foundation School requested that the name of the Digital Mapping system be incorporated (GGP which is a Geographic Information System).

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1:** Cabinet considers and accepts the policy document; or,

3.2 **Option 2:** Cabinet considers the policy document and provides any recommendations for change that can be made in consideration of the publication date of the 15th April 2023.

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

4.1 In accordance with the Welsh Government's School Admissions and Admission Appeals Code (2013), there is a statutory requirement upon the Council to determine and publish their admissions arrangements annually

by the 15th April, the year preceding the admissions round to which they apply.

- 4.2 Education is a priority in the Council's Corporate Plan of which the planning of school places, is an essential component.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

There are no direct budget implications associated with this report.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

There is a risk that the Council will not be compliant with the Welsh Government School Admissions Code (2013), if the policy is not approved and published by the 15th April 2023. The timeline for approval takes account of the publication requirements and dates.

5.3 **Legal**

The Council is legally required to prepare, implement and update accessibility strategies for all schools for which they are the responsible body.

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

- 5.5. The Schools Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2024/25 has been developed by the Education Transformation team, who oversee implementation and reviews the policy within Blaenau Gwent.

- 5.7 The Education Directorate Management Team along with Wider Corporate Leadership Team, have a key role to play in ensuring that the policy is effectively implemented and reviewed in accordance with relevant strategy, policy and regulatory frameworks.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

Please refer to **Appendix 2**, for a summary of the 2022/23 Admissions Round. The Council is presently implementing the 2023/24 policy.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

The public can expect a fair and equitable admissions process for all pupils in accessing education, and where possible place allocation in line with parent/pupil preference.

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

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

consultation with key stakeholders including: schools, partners, governing bodies, parents etc.

6.4 Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)

The admissions process contributes to effective pupil place planning and management, ensuring that there are sufficient pupil places and promoting access to education for all Blaenau Gwent pupils.

6.5 Preventative focus

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

6.6 Collaboration / partnership working

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

6.7 Integration (across service areas)

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

6.8 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.

6.8.1 The Minister for Education and Welsh Language, announced on November 2nd 2021 that all new school and college buildings, major refurbishments and extension projects, will be required to meet Net Zero Carbon targets from January 1st 2022. The Council are committed to and are working with Welsh Government in the implementation of this agenda.

6.9 Integrated Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Screening Assessment (EQIA) has been completed in line with the policy, which determined that there is no negative impact upon

the protected characteristics. The policy promotes equality of opportunity for all, with regards to accessing education.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

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

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Draft Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education (2024/25)

Appendix 2 – Annual Admissions Analysis 2022/23

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2024/25

Blaenau Gwent Admission Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education



Consultation Process

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

Consultation will commence on Wednesday 11th January 2023 and conclude at 5pm on Wednesday 25th January 2023. The admission arrangements will then be published on 15th April 2023, the year preceding the 2024/2025 admissions round. The Local Authority will ensure that the following information is provided during the consultation process:

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

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

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

Blaenau Gwent Proposed Admission Policy for Statutory Education 2024/25

1. Introduction/ Purpose

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

- Acorns Nursery
- All Saints Roman Catholic Primary School
- Brynmawr Foundation School
- Cylch Meithrin Brynithel
- **Tiggys Day Care**
- St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School
- St Mary's Church in Wales Primary School
- St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

The Blaenau Gwent Admissions Policy for Nursery (non-statutory) and Statutory Education has been updated in line with confirmed admission numbers and the dates from the 2023/24 admission round. All other content remains the same. The policy is fully compliant with the Welsh Government School Admissions Code (2013) and School Admissions Appeal Code (2013). This document outlines requirements associated with and guidance relating to pupil admissions and in-year transfers/admissions for nursery, primary, and secondary school place allocation within Blaenau Gwent.

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

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

Minister for Education and Skills (2013)

2. Admission Types

2.1 Nursery Education

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

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

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

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

2.2 Admission to Primary Education

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

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

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

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

2.2.1 Allocation of Primary School Places at Abertillery Learning Community

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

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

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

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

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

2.2.2 Allocation of School Places at Ysgol Gymraeg Brohelyg

In the case of Welsh Medium Education, the admission authority (Blaenau Gwent Council) is responsible for placing pupils at the federation of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg and Ysgol Gymraeg Tredegar. These pupils are then allocated a place at either the Blaina or Tredegar Campus by Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg Leadership team and Governing Body.

Parents should clearly note their preference when completing the admission form for Welsh-medium education.

2.3 Admission to Secondary School

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

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

In the case of both Ebbw Fawr Learning Community and Abertillery Learning Community, **pupils who are on roll in Year 6** at the primary phase will automatically transfer to/ be allocated a place at the secondary phase. In this instance a separate admission application is **not** required. ***Please note all other secondary settings require an application to be made in order for a place to be allocated. When making an application for an alternative secondary school automatic place allocation will be removed from the secondary phase.**

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

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

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

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

- **Hard to place pupils**– applicants who are considered hard to place, fall into one or more of the categories presented below. The 14 categories cover circumstances and/or needs which would deem or contribute to a learner being considered as hard to place:
 - Children who were permanently excluded from their last maintained school placement and are able / ready to integrate to an alternative school;
 - Children returning from the criminal justice system (secure estate);
 - Child victims of serious crimes (child cruelty, kidnapping, sexual or violent crime, FGM);
 - Children who are CLA;
 - Children who have been out of education for longer than two months;
 - Children with below 50% attendance;
 - Children with disabilities or medical conditions which have already impacted on their attendance or participation at school;
 - Children of carers, Gypsies, Roma, Travellers, children whose parents offend, asylum seekers and refugees who have been in the UK less than two years and need a supported entry to school;
 - Homeless children who have been placed in temporary housing;
 - Children who are in a refuge due to domestic violence;
 - Children of UK service personnel where a change of location ordered by the service leads to a need for a change of school and will have experienced multiple moves;
 - Children who have received 10 day exclusions in the last twelve months; and/or,
 - Children on the child protection register.

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

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

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

***Please note:**

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

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

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

2.5 Requests for Admission Outside of Chronological Year Group

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

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

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

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

The Council has a policy in place which ensures that children and young people who may benefit from what is called a 'managed move' are able to move schools in an organised and coordinated way, ensuring that their needs are appropriately met. This policy is called the Managed Move policy and implemented via the **Vulnerable Learner Panel**. Where appropriate the Admissions Officer will consider the individual circumstances in line with the

Welsh Government Admissions Code (2013), and if the school is over subscribed, utilise and implement 'excepted pupil' status (for more information please see the aforementioned Welsh Government School Admissions Code, 2013, page 27), in order to admit the pupil.

The Vulnerable Learner Panel consists of the following representatives:

- Senior Education Welfare Officer – Chair ((in the Senior Education Welfare Officers absence the ALN Service manager will attend)
- School Admissions Officer;
- Youth Service; and,
- Headteachers/ Senior Leaders and school ALNCOs as well as other professionals/officers as and when required.

The Council has a number of Resource Base provisions throughout Blaenau Gwent to meet the needs of pupils with complex needs, social emotional and behavioural needs (SEBD) or autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) needs of pupils with complex needs, social, emotional and behaviour difficulties (SEBD) or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). A resource base will be considered where it is felt that the mainstream setting cannot meet the needs of the child/young person.

The Council also has two special schools:

- Pen-Y-Cwm Special School, which caters for children and young people with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties throughout the 3-19 age range.
- River Centre 3-16 Learning Community which caters for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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

- ALN Manager – Chair (in the ALN Managers absence the ALN Service manager will attend)
- Educational Psychologist
- Education Welfare Officer
- Headteachers
- ALNCOs as well as other professionals/officers as and when required.

If the application is for Ty Afon then this will be determined by the Vulnerable Learner Panel.

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

Where an application is received for a pupil in receipt of either a Statement of Educational Need or a **Local Authority** Individual Development Plan (IDP), the application is shared with the ALN team. Based on need identified in the IDP **ALN Panel will determine placement.**

The Welsh Government admission code states there are certain categories of children where schools **must** admit and without delay as follows:

Children with Statements of SEN

In general, the admission of children with statements of SEN is covered by the Education Act 1996. Guidance on the admission of children with statements is provided in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales. Consequently, the admissions provisions in the 1998 Act do not generally apply to children with statements of SEN. Section 324 of the Education Act 1996 requires a maintained school that is named in a statement of SEN to admit the child. Schools cannot refuse to admit even if by doing so they would exceed their admission number.

If a LA has provided a statement for a child with SEN it is responsible for ensuring that the special educational provision is made for the child. The LA may identify a particular school which it considers to be suitable for the child's needs, and name the school in the statement. Admission authorities must be mindful of their duties with regards to Equalities Legislation and guidance on improving the accessibility of schools. If the parent of a child with a statement of SEN wishes to appeal against the school named in the statement, or the fact that no school has been named, the appeal is to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Wales, not to the admission appeal panel.

In certain cases, pupils may be granted excepted pupil status in compliance with the School Admissions Code, which determines that:

Where certain types of children ("excepted pupils") cannot be provided with education at the school in another infant class in which the limit is not exceeded without relevant measures being taken which would prejudice efficient education or the efficient use of resources, those children are not to be counted for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not the limit of 30 pupils is exceeded. Excepted children are:

- *Children whose statements of SEN specify that they should be educated at the school concerned, and who were admitted to the school outside a normal admission round.*
- *Children who are looked after by local authorities (looked after children), or who have ceased to be looked after (previously looked after children) as a result of being adopted or being placed with a family or given a special guardian and are admitted to the school outside a normal admission round.*
- *Children initially refused admission to a school, but subsequently offered a place outside a normal admission round by direction of an admission appeal panel, or because the person responsible for making the original decision recognises that an error was made in implementing the school's admission arrangements.*

- *Children admitted outside the normal admission round who:

 - *the maintaining local authority confirmed cannot gain a place at any other suitable school within a reasonable distance of their home because they have moved into the area outside a normal admission round, or**
- *Children who were admitted to the school outside the normal admission round after which the school has arranged its classes, and after the first day of the school year, the effect of which would mean that the school would have to take a relevant measure if such children were not excepted pupils.*
- *Children of armed forces personnel who are admitted outside the normal admission round.*
- *Children whose twin or other sibling from a multiple birth are admitted as non-excepted pupils, as the final pupil(s) allocated a place before the admission number is reached.*
- *Children who are registered pupils at special schools, but who receive part of their education at a mainstream school.*
- *Children with SEN who are normally educated in a special unit in a mainstream school, who receive part of their lessons in a non-special class*

*Excepted pupils will remain so, once admitted, for the remainder of their time in an infant class or until class numbers fall back and they can be organised to comply with the infant class size limit. For example, because a non-excepted child leaves the class, an additional infant class is created, or an additional teacher is appointed, then that child ceases to be an excepted pupil. Classes **must** be organised so as to comply with the limit wherever possible.*

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

3. School Admission Criteria

The determination of school admissions differs between Local Authority maintained and non-maintained schools. The faith schools, foundation school, and non-maintained early year's education providers within Blaenau Gwent, maintain their own policies and criteria. These differ to the standardised

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

- Acorns Nursery
- All Saints Roman Catholic Primary School
- Brynmawr Foundation School
- Cylch Meithrin Brynithel
- **Tiggys Day Care**
- St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School
- St Mary's Church in Wales Primary School
- St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Proof of Residency (**copies of one of the following**)
 - Valid driving licence including paper licence
 - Council tax bill (for the 2022/23 year)
 - Recent child benefit / child tax credit notification, naming the child for whom the application has been made
 - Utility bills (within the last three months)
 - NHS Medical card
- Proof of Date of birth (**copies of one of the following**)
 - Child's birth certificate
 - NHS medical card
 - Valid passport which displays your child date of birth

Applications to the Council should be made online via the following link:

<https://citizenportal.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/CitizenPortal/en>

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

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

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

provided upon initial request, the Council will then attempt to chase the parent/ guardian or carer for the information a further **three times only**.

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

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

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

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

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

i) Children Looked After

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

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

ii) Catchment School

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

iii) Social/Medical

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

iv) Brother or Sister

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

v) Distance

Children living closest to the preferred school measured by the shortest recognised permitted walking route between the pupils' front door of the home and school gate using a digital mapping system (**GGP which is a geographic information system**).

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

6. Deciding Factors associated with prioritising Admissions

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

7. Shared residency

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

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

8. Person making the application form

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

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

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

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

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

9. Multiple births

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

10. Timeframe for Processing Admissions as Part of the 2024/25 Admission Round

Nursery

For places to be allocated in spring summer and autumn term of 2024;

Admission round commences on	5 th September 2023
Closing date for applications	5pm on 21 st October 2023
Offer date	20 th November 2023

Reception

Admission round commences on	8 th January 2024
Closing date for applications	5pm on 26 th February 2024
Offer date	16 th April 2024

Secondary

Admission round commences on	25 th September 2023
Closing date for applications	5pm on 24 th November 2023
Offer date	1 st March 2024

11. Arrangements with Neighbouring Admissions Authorities and Neighbouring Local Authorities

Where parents wish to apply for their child to attend a school in the Caerphilly area i.e. Newbridge Comprehensive School, you are required to apply via the relevant Caerphilly Council application form or by making an on-line application via the Caerphilly Council website. Any such applications **must** be received by Caerphilly's School Admissions Team by the relevant published closing date as outlined in Caerphilly Council's admissions policy.

If you are a Blaenau Gwent resident and wish to apply to schools which are situated in Merthyr, Monmouthshire, Torfaen or Powys you are required to apply to Blaenau Gwent, either on line or via paper copy and we will liaise with the relevant Authority.

12. Late Applications

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

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

13. Change of Preferences

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

14. Waiting Lists

Following the allocation of places during the normal admission round, children will remain on the waiting list for their preferred school until 30th September the following academic year. Thereafter, parents/ guardians or carers will be required to make a new application for admission. If additional places become available, they will be allocated to children on the waiting list on the basis of the published oversubscription criteria. **Waiting lists do not give priority to children based on the date the application was added to the list.**

15. Children of UK Service Personnel and other Crown Servants (including diplomats).

Families of UK personnel and other Crown Servants are subject to frequent movement within the UK and from abroad, often at relatively short notice. School places should be allocated to children and their families in advance of the approaching school year if accompanied by an official Ministry of

Defence(MOD) or Foreign or Commonwealth Office (FCO) letter declaring a return date and confirmation of the new address wherever possible.

16. Children Housed via Domestic Violence Services and Organisations

Children temporarily housed under the protection of approved Domestic Violence agencies will be admitted as a priority to the catchment school if the application form is accompanied by an official letter from the relevant agency.

17. Gypsy and Traveller Children

The Council is obliged, by statute, to ensure that all children of compulsory school age receive education that is appropriate to their age, abilities and any special educational needs, and promotes high standards in the provision of education and the welfare of children. These obligations apply to all children whether they are permanent residents in the area.

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

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

19. Admission Appeals for Primary and Secondary School Places

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

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

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

Head of Law and Standards,
General Offices,

Steelworks Road,
Ebbw Vale,
Blaenau Gwent.
NP23 6DN

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

20. Home to School and Post 16 Transports

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

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

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

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

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

21. Post 16 Travel

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

- students must be between the ages of 16 to 19 (under 19 prior to the 1st September of the commencement of their course) to qualify;
- students shall reside in the County Borough of Blaenau Gwent;
- students must reside 2 miles or over (nearest walking distance) from their nearest college campus; and, the students should attend a full time course

which requires attendance of 16 or more hours per week or a minimum 4 days attendance per week at the institution.

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

All transport for Post 16 pupils including those with additional learning needs is agreed on a case by case basis by the **ALN team** in consultation with the Transport Officer. The Council may provide transport up to a maximum of three years **until the pupil's 19th Birthday**.

22. Travel Grant

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

23. Welsh Medium / Faith Education

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

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

Appendix 1 – Published Admission Numbers

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

- Acorns Nursery
- All Saints Roman Catholic Primary School
- Brynmawr Foundation School
- Cylch Meithrin Brynithel
- **Tiggys Day Care**
- St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School
- St Mary's Church in Wales Primary School
- St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

Published Admission Numbers for 2024/25

School *The school highlighted in red are responsible for their own admission arrangements and as such, applications need to be submitted directly to the school.	Nursery Admission Number	Session	Statutory Admission Number (Reception or Year 7)
All Saints R.C. Primary School	30	am	26
Beaufort Hill Primary School	30	am	30
Blaen y Cwm Primary School	26	full time	38
Brynbach Primary School	30	am	30
Coed y Garn Primary School	30	full time	30
Cwm Primary School	52	am	

	52	pm	30
Deighton Primary School	30	am	30
	30	pm	
Georgetown Primary School	23	am	60
	23	pm	
Glanhowy Primary School	65	am	42
	65	pm	
Glyncoed Primary School	52	am	45
	52	pm	
Rhos y Fedwen Primary School	26	full time	25
St. Illtyd's Primary School	30	am	30
St. Joseph's R.C. Primary School	41	full time	15
St. Mary's Church-in-Wales Primary School	30	am	30
St. Mary's R.C Primary School	53	Full time	30
Soffryd Primary School	19	am	23
	19	pm	
Willowtown Primary School	30	am	60
	30	pm	
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg	60	full time	30
Ystruth Primary School	37	am	42
	37	pm	

	Nursery Admission Number	Session	Statutory Admission Number (Reception or Year 7)
<u>Secondary School</u>			
Brynmawr Foundation School			151
Tredegar Comprehensive School			152
<u>Middle School</u>			
Abertillery Learning Community – Primary Phase	141		140
Abertillery Learning Community – Secondary Phase			150
Ebbw Fawr Learning Community -	47	am	38

Primary Phase		
Ebbw Fawr Learning Community - Secondary Phase		238

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Appendix 2 - Blaenau Gwent Schools Catchment Area Overview Map



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Analysis:

School Admissions – 2022/23 Admissions Round Analysis

The Admissions team have successfully implemented the School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2022/23, which is evidenced by the following assessment:

- 100% of applications were processed within 48 hours and 100% of standard in-year transfer requests were processed within 15 days of receipt in accordance with the WG School Admissions Code (2013) and Blaenau Gwent's School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2022/23.
- Transfer rates have remained steady over the last 4 academic sessions, from 355 in 2018/19. The rate of 229 in 2019/2020 - Figures were much lower due to covid. The transfer rates increased slightly in 2020/2021 to 295. The rates have decreased slightly during 2021/2022 to 136 (99 primary transfers/37 secondary transfers) the primary reason for in-year transfer being inward migration of families into the Blaenau Gwent area.
- Complex transfers were received on a weekly basis and referred to the SEN team for consideration at ALN Panel.
- The admissions officer has attended all ALN Panel meetings and/ or liaised directly with the SEN team on pupil placement.
- No appeals were held for the reception or secondary admission rounds during the summer period 2022.
- The numbers of in-time applications received for pupils who applied for a school place during the 2022/23 admission round, decreased slightly for nursery, reception and secondary when compared to 2020/21. Please refer to Figure 1 below for the in-time percentage comparisons:

Figure 1: In-time Application (%)

Percentage of In-time Applications 2020/21	Percentage of In-time Applications 2021/22	Percentage of In-time Applications 2022/23
Nursery – 60%	Nursery – 71%	Nursery – 66%
Reception – 75%	Reception – 83%	Reception – 78%
Secondary – 79%	Secondary – 80%	Secondary – 78%

- The Council were able to sustain 100% of parental first preferences for a 4 year period in respect of both nursery and secondary place allocation, and 99% of first preferences were met for the reception year group, however, for the 2022/2023 academic year 100% of first preferences have now been met (please refer to **Figure 2** below). This is attributable to the effective monitoring and management of school capacities and pupil places along with the continued achievement of surplus place reduction, whereby school admission numbers for primary schools with a high surplus have been reduced over the last year and in turn the admission number has also been reduced.

Figure 2: First Preferences Met %

% of First Preferences Met for In-time Applications 2019/20	% of First Preferences Met for In-time Applications 2020/21	% of First Preferences Met for In-time Applications 2021/22	% of First Preferences Met for In-time Applications 2022/23
Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 100%
Reception – 99%	Reception – 99%	Reception – 99%	Reception – 100%
Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%

The Welsh Government School Admissions Code (2013) dictates that Councils must review their admissions policies annually for consultation and publication by April 15th in the academic year preceding the admissions round. Blaenau Gwent School Admissions Policy outlines the arrangements, criteria and relevant legislation that underpin school admission processes and methodology. The primary changes to the policy document for the 2022/23 academic session were as follows:

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

The Admissions Policy for 2023/24 was consulted upon and published in line with the Welsh Government’s deadline (April 2022).

We went fully online for the 2022/2023 admission rounds using Capita One Online– with parents being fully supported by the team in their application process and submission.

The Admissions Forum met three times over the last year (September 2021 – August 2022).

The Forum has sustained a good level of attendance at each meeting. The Forum has worked closely with the Education Transformation team in order to:

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

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Agenda Item 11

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.02.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 15.02.23

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **1st March 2023**

Report Subject: **Regional Partnership Update**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Hayden Trollope, Cabinet Member People and Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Tanya Evans, Interim Corporate Director of Social Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	19.01.23	14.02.23			07.02.23	01.03.23		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members on the work and decisions taken by the Regional Partnership Board since April 2022.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The SSWB Act came into force in April 2016, Part 9 of the Act sets out statutory requirement for a Regional Partnership Board (RPB), along with the required minimum membership.
- 2.2 Regional Partnership Boards have been established on current local health board footprints – so the Gwent regional partnership board includes Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) and Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, and Torfaen local authorities.
- 2.3 The Cabinet member in each local authority, with responsibility for health and social care, sits on the Regional Partnership Board.
- 2.4 The Regional Partnership Board (RPB) is an advisory body, that does not take away the existing responsibilities of the individual statutory bodies, but it is expected to have oversight of and provide direction to, any areas of integrated working across health and social care. To support the work of the RPB there are a number of boards and partnership arrangements that sit underneath and focus on specific areas of work. This governance landscape can be seen under **Appendix 1**.
- 2.5 The Regional Partnership Board has met on 4 occasions since April 2022. The Board has focused on the following areas
- Oversight of the Regional Integration Fund
 - Oversight of the Winter Pressures Plan
 - The sign off of a Gwent Market Position Statement
 - The Eliminating Profit from Children's Services

2.6 This report will now give more detailed information on each of the areas highlighted above.

3. Oversight of the Regional Integration Fund

3.1 The Health and Social Care Regional Integration Fund (the RIF) is now a 5-year fund to deliver a programme of change from April 2022 to March 2027.

3.2 The RIF builds on the learning and progress made under the previous Integrated Care Fund (ICF) and Transformation Fund (TF) and seeks to create sustainable system change through the integration of health and social care services

3.3 The total allocation of the Regional Integration Fund for Gwent Regional Partnership Board is £26,858,840. Whilst the funding is provided at the outset of the financial year (to be allocated as determined by the Regional Partnership Board in line with RIF guidance), part of the financial allocation is ring fenced for specific use, or for specific priority groups where minimum investment levels are identified.

3.4 The ring-fenced elements of the Regional Integration Fund relate to the Dementia Action Plan (£1.611m), Memory Assessment Services (£0.565m), the Integrated Autism Service (£0.458m) and ring-fenced carers funding (£0.191m).

3.5 The aim is, by the end of the five-year programme we will have established and mainstreamed at least six new national models of integrated care so that citizens of Wales, wherever they live, can be assured of an effective and seamless service experience in relation to.

- Community based care – *prevention and community coordination*
- Community based care – *complex care closer to home*
- Promoting good emotional health and well-being
- Supporting families to stay together safely, and therapeutic support for care experienced children
- Home from hospital services
- Accommodation based solutions

3.6 In addition to working towards these models of integrated care the programmes that are funded by the RIF are working towards the priorities developed as a result of the population needs assessment which the RPB is required to undertake. These priorities can be found under **Appendix 2**

3.7 In September 2022 the Regional Partnership Board agreed the Financial Programme of work to be undertaken using the Regional Integration Fund. However, as part of the guidance issued by Welsh Government there was an expectation that the programmes being delivered would move to being funded from the RIF to local authority and health core budgets over the 5-year period with funding tapering off year on year. The Regional

Partnership Board lobbied Welsh Government hard to stop the tapering for 2023/24 due to the significant budget pressures. Late December Ministers agreed to pause the tapering element until 2024/25. This means that the current programme can continue for a further 12 months.

4. **Oversight of the Winter Pressure Plan**

- 4.1 As stated in the terms of reference, the RPB is the key leadership body to oversee all integration work across health and social care and to formally represent the interests of the local authorities, the Health Board, and its key stakeholders. The RPB is responsible for monitoring progress and the ongoing delivery of integrated work programmes. The winter plan is one of those work programmes.
- 4.2 The Winter Plan gives consideration to the demands and capacity constraints within our system, identifying the need to avoid hospital admission wherever appropriate, and strengthen our discharge enablers and community capacity to ensure people are able to receive care at home or close to home wherever possible.
- 4.3 The July meeting of the Regional Partnership Board received a report which reviewed how the 2021/22 winter plan had helped manage the health and social care winter pressures. It was acknowledged there were many aspects of the Winter Plan that could be repeated to provide the short-term additional capacity needed to respond to the expected rise in demand and increased staff shortages through illness during a winter period. There were also areas identified for further development, particularly those that were attempting to create additional capacity within the system to respond to the ongoing community workforce constraints
- 4.4 There is a balance to be sought between temporary short-term solutions to address additional winter demand, and longer-term sustainable solutions that will support ongoing system flow challenges.
- 4.5 As a region we were in the fortuitous position of having an underspend in the Regional Integration Fund which enabled the development of the 2022/23 winter plan without causing added cost pressures. The outline winter plan can be seen under **Appendix 3**

5. **The sign off of a Gwent Market position statement**

- 5.1 The Social Services and Wellbeing Act requires Regional Partnership Boards to complete a market stability report (MSR) on a regional footprint to help local authorities and ABUHB understand the dynamics of the market for regulated services in our area. This MSR is structured in accordance with Welsh Government's '*Code of Practice and guidance on the exercise of social services functions and partnership arrangements in relation to market stability reports*'. The Code of Practice states that: "*Market stability reports are designed to give a high-level overview and assessment of the*

overall sufficiency of care and support, and of the stability of the market for regulated services.”

- 5.2 In September 2022 the RPB signed off the 2022 Market stability report.
- 5.3 This MSR highlights the current provision and helps assess issues such as the sufficiency, quality, and sustainability of regulated services within Gwent. A regulated service is those listed in the Schedule to the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Currently these are:
- Care home services (adult and children's)
 - Secure accommodation service (for children)
 - Residential family centre services
 - Adoption services
 - Fostering services
 - Adult placement ('Shared Lives') service
 - Advocacy services
 - Domiciliary support services
- 5.4 A summary of the findings in the MSR can be found under **Appendix 4**. A briefing was delivered to Blaenau Gwent members in November 2022. The issues raised in the MSR will be picked up in the Area Plan and measures to mitigate threats to market stability will be outlined.

6. **The Eliminating Profit from Children's Services**

- 6.1 Welsh Government has made a policy commitment to remove private profit from the care of looked after children. A multi-agency Programme Board has been established to implement this commitment to rebalance the market so that the duties on local authorities in relation to looked after children are not contracted out to for-profit companies but remain with public sector and not-for-profit providers.
- 6.2 A consultation on this commitment was launched in August 2022 and closed in November 2022. The intention is to introduce primary legislation which would mean only residential and foster care services operating under a non-profit model would be eligible to register with Care Inspectorate Wales from 2027. If passed, new legislation would require providers to demonstrate a not-for-profit status, based on a new pre-defined definition of non-profit, by 1 April 2026.
- 6.3 The Regional Partnership Board is well sighted on this policy commitment and is in agreement with the principle of removing profit. However, the RPB is concerned this commitment will lead to the unintended consequence of further reducing the provision of foster care and residential placements for children in Wales at a time when there is clear evidence via the market stability report that current demand outstrips supply.
- 6.4 The Board will await the outcome of the consultation no doubt this will form part of the area plan going forward.

7. **Options for Recommendation**

7.1 The Partnership Scrutiny Committee supported Option 1 at its meeting on 7th February 2023.

7.2 The options for consideration are:

Option 1 – to consider the report and to support the programme of work by the Regional Partnership Board.

Option 2 – to consider the report and propose an alternative approach to Cabinet in relation to the options taken by Regional Partnership Board.

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

The report is fulfilling our statutory functions under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 and accompanying regulations. The work of the RPB is also supporting the following Corporate Priorities:

- Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent
- An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place
- Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent, and resilient

9. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

As already mentioned in the body of the report there would have been significant budgetary implications if the tapering had been applied to the Regional Integration Fund. Welsh Government has paused this for 12 months; however, this will be a risk going forward for all programmes.

9.2 ***Legal***

The Legal department becomes involved in considering and advising on any legal agreements before signing such as the Section 33 Agreement.

9.3 ***Human Resources***

The Gwent Transformational Team support senior officers and elected members to deliver and implement the priorities of the Regional Partnership Board. In addition, they administer the Regional Partnership Board and Leadership Group. The Gwent Transformation Team is hosted by Torfaen County Borough Council.

10. **Supporting Evidence**

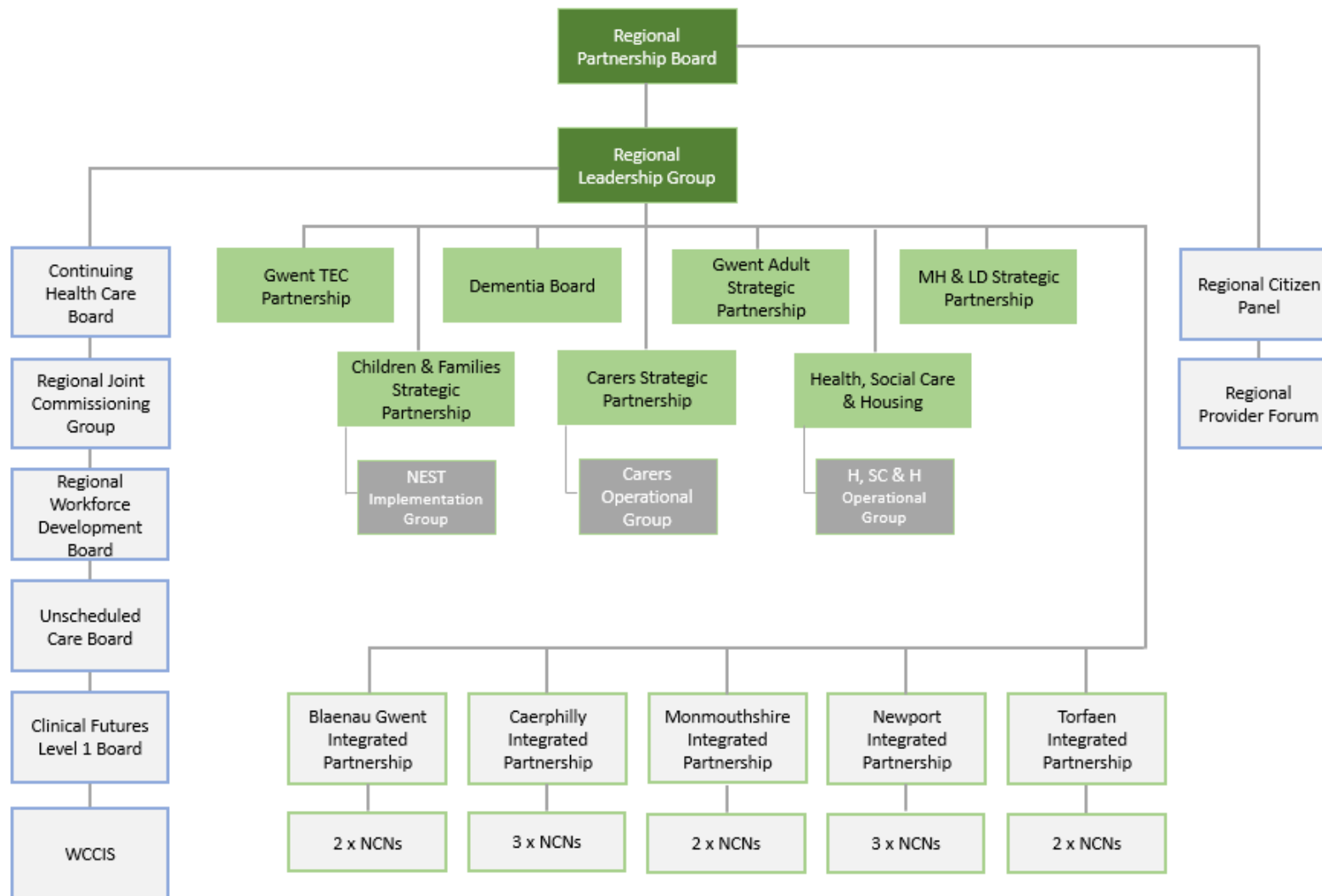
10.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Not applicable.

- 10.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***
The role of the Regional Partnership Board is to ensure more seamless provision of health and social care services across Gwent.
- 10.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***
The Regional Partnership Board has involvement from the third sector and representation from the Citizens Panel to ensure engagement and involvement in its direction.
- 10.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***
The Regional Partnership Board provides the opportunity to work collectively and have a long-term vision to progress integration and partnership across the Gwent region.
- 10.5 ***Preventative focus***
The Regional Partnership Board within its strategic intent statement will be considering how Health and Social Services can work together in a more preventative way.
- 10.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***
The role the Regional Partnership Board is to work collaboratively across boundaries to benefit citizens requiring health and social care services across Gwent.
- 10.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***
The purpose of the Regional Partnership Board is to foster integration between Health and Social Services.
- 10.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***
The report contents do not relate specifically to this agenda; indirectly local employment supports to ensure:
- People having the opportunity to work closer to home;
 - The public can access services closer to home;
 - Employment and service provision locally relates specifically to the decarbonisation agenda.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 – Regional Partnership Board Structure*
- *Appendix 2 – Priorities Gwent Population Needs Assessment*
- *Appendix 3 – Winter Plan*
- *Appendix 4 – Market Stability Report Summary 2022*



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Priorities Gwent Population Needs Assessment

Children and Young People

Emerging Priorities

- 1. To improve outcomes for children and young people with complex needs through earlier intervention, community-based support, and placements closer to home.**
- 2. To ensure good mental health and emotional well-being for children and young people through effective partnership working especially mitigating long term impact of Covid-19 pandemic.**

Market Position Summary

- There is a need to continue strengthening services and partnerships around a single front door approach to reduce hand offs between organisations and establish a sequenced approach to multiple intervention needs.**
- The RPB will continue to implement principles of NEST/NYTH and across all services to remain focused on what matters to children, young people and families as we move to a whole system approach.**
- Given the new programme of government priority to eliminate profit in residential care for children looked after, the RPB will support this agenda and also the early intervention and preventative services that help reduce children becoming looked after.**

Older people

Emerging Priorities

- 1. To improve emotional well-being for older people by reducing loneliness and social isolation with earlier intervention and community resilience.**
- 2. To improve outcomes for people living with dementia and their carers**
- 3. To support older people to live, or return following a period of hospitalisation, to their own homes and communities through early intervention, integrated care models and a whole system approach.**
- 4. To mitigate the long term impact of Covid-19 pandemic through, especially reducing waiting lists and times to access support, appointments and medical procedures.**



Market Position Summary:

- There is an increasing need to further support the emotional wellbeing for older people, through reducing loneliness and isolation issues and providing multi-agency early intervention and community support to boost wellbeing.
- We need to strengthen partnerships, services and coproduction models to improve the outcomes for people living with dementia and their carers.
- The RPB will need to strengthen partnerships and practices across health, social care and independent/third sector to ensure we are supporting people to remain well at home for as long as possible, and are able to return home from hospital, through an enhanced reablement approach.

People with disabilities

Emerging Priorities

1. To support disabled people, including sensory impairment, through an all-age approach to live independently in appropriate accommodation and access community-based services, including transport.
2. Ensure people are supported through access to accurate information, assistance and 'rehabilitation' where required.
3. Improve transition across all age groups and support services.

Market Position Summary:

- The RPB need to ensure all frontline workers receive up to date training and awareness raising in relation to the various information portals and sites that provide useful advice to the public, which will require training and awareness raising.
- Recruitment across health and social care needs to increase including specific roles such as Rehabilitation Officers for Visual Impairment.

People with learning disabilities

Emerging Priorities

1. To support people with learning disabilities to live independently with access to early intervention services in the community; and greater public awareness and understanding of people with learning disabilities needs.



Market Position Summary:

- There is a need to increase the number of bespoke and individual support packages for people with a learning disability which will involve more one to one support in the community and will require the recruitment of a greater number of volunteers.

Autistic Spectrum disorder

Emerging Priorities

1. To provide more timely diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder and access to support services and information and advice.
2. To improve awareness, understanding and acceptance of autistic people.

Market Position Summary:

- There is an increasing need to deliver further autism training and awareness to health, social care and wider RPB partners as well as the wider public.

Awareness of mental health

Emerging Priorities

1. Increased understanding and awareness of mental health amongst the public to reduce stigma and help people to seek support earlier.
2. To improve emotional well-being and mental health for adults and children through early intervention and community support.

Market Position Summary:

- We need to promote the mental wellbeing of people in Gwent and ensure that the workforce is supported to be able to provide people with the support they need at the right time.



Unpaid carers & Young carers / young adult carers

Emerging Priorities

1. Support unpaid carers to care through flexible respite, access to accurate information, peer to peer support, effective care planning and through increased public understanding.
2. Improve well-being of young carers and young adult carers, and mitigate against the long-term impact of Covid-19 pandemic

Market Position Summary

- There is still a need to increase awareness of the needs of carers and for frontline staff to be able to recognise when people take on caring responsibilities and signposted to information, especially young carers.
- Peer to peer support and respite provision are continually highlighted as being a priority need for carers and there is a need to increase support through third sector and community partners to increase befriending opportunities and community groups.

Housing

Emerging Priorities

1. A multi-agency partnership approach to ensure appropriate housing and accommodation for older people and vulnerable citizens
2. To ensure effective use of Disabled Facilities Grants and appropriate partnership support and available resources.
3. Homelessness requiring a collaborative response from public services and partners, especially the non-use of B&B accommodation for young people, and through prevention and early intervention.

ACTIVITY	STATUS	DEPENDENCY/ RISKS	MITIGATION	PROPOSED IMPACT	VIABILITY RAG RATING	IMPACT RAG RATING
<p>Create additional beds as part of a graduated care pathway (costings and modelling taking place on 80 beds). Supporting convalescence for individuals awaiting community support.</p>	<p>CIW attended Winter Planning Group 10/10/22 to discuss governance</p> <p>A session is arranged for 20/10/22 to understand registration requirements, particularly aimed at HB's implementing SC2H equivalents within hospital facilities.</p> <p>Concerns re. care home stability in some areas</p> <p>Additional opportunities continued to be explore.</p> <p>Bi-weekly meetings arranged by Delivery Unit to monitor progress</p>	<p>Staff shortages noted in the care home sector, may impact the ability for homes to respond to the tender invitation.</p> <p>Ability to source Therapy capacity (OT/Physio/Assts)</p> <p>Throughput of the pathway to maintain flow</p> <p>Capacity of GP surgery(ies) to support additional care home capacity</p>	<p>Refined patient cohort included within service specification for these beds.</p> <p>Patients moved on maintenance plans waiting for PoC, reduced reliance on therapy capacity</p> <p>To be considered following care home responses as to suitable geographical area – engage with NCN leads</p>	<p>Up to 693 patients could be supported within a 26 weeks timeframe</p> <p>Reduction in DTOC</p>	<p>LOW-MED</p> <p>Workforce constraints across all sectors may impact ability to implement model</p>	<p>Flow Impact - Medium</p> <p>A&E Impact - Very Low</p> <p>Community Hospital Impact - Medium</p>
<p>New Directions Caerphilly</p> <p>Continue to provide domiciliary care commissioning via complex care (inc. within current SC2H pathway)</p>	<p>Ongoing informal arrangement</p>	<p>Continued availability of provision; no risks identified through consideration</p>	<p>Nil required</p>	<p>Maintained or improved DTOC position</p> <p>Good person centred outcomes</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Low additional impact as Stabilising existing capacity</p>

<p>Additional winter capacity within community teams Supporting the ability to offer additional hours of work to mitigate further staff shortages due to sickness/leave over the winter period (provided via overtime/ additional hours of existing staff)</p>	<p>Scoping underway across all localities; capacity typically needed from December to February/March</p>	<p>Reliant on willingness of staff</p>	<p>Nil available</p>	<p>Stabilised workforce Capacity to provide 7 day working (e.g. brokerage over the weekend)</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Equitable fuel reimbursement for care staff (<i>providers only – excl. Health and Social Care care staff</i>) Responding to the cost of living crisis and increasing number of carers leaving the profession, methodology developed to identify methods of providing equitable fuel reimbursement for care staff across the region.</p>	<p>Costings currently being received. LA Commissioners linking with complex care to share methodology</p>	<p>Mitigate ongoing staff retention issues due to the cost of living crisis within the provider sector</p>	<p>Not required</p>	<p>Stabilised workforce</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Low-Med - stabilising existing capacity</p>

<p>COTE/Frailty Redesign - 8-8 CRT Model</p> <p>extend the operational hours for CRT rapid medical up to 8pm Monday to Friday, by Jan/Feb 23. It is proposed that by recruiting additional support now, it would be possible to make the existing CRT medical team more robust across all areas and develop a weekend response in the same timescale.</p>	<p>Recruitment underway for the consultant and ANP posts to support extended opening hours.</p>	<p>Recruitment</p> <p>Initiative cannot be viewed in isolation of the wider activities within the CRT</p>	<p>Comms and engagement across all CRTs re. the Pilot development</p> <p>Clear dependency map</p>	<p>As a 7 day model, the service could support a further 32 patients to remain at home each week, avoiding a hospital admission</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>COTE/Frailty Redesign - Proactive Frailty Transformation Project</p> <p>developing a robust method of identification and collaborative planning, admissions and GP interactions reduce.</p> <p>Project resource needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 WTE Band 8a programme manager • 4 medical sessions each week spilt across CRT consultant and GP 	<p>Opportunity identified within COTE/Frailty Redesign programme; activity proposed to be brought forward into winter activity to enable earlier benefits realisation (into 2023-24)</p> <p>Recruitment underway</p>	<p>Recruitment</p>	<p>Nil</p>	<p>Work with the three projects that are currently in existence and would develop the proactive frailty project in these areas.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Low</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 WTE Band 5 Project support officer 						
<p>COTE/Frailty Redesign: Night Time Support</p> <p>Develop two teams of HCSW working initially in the out of hours period 8 pm to 8am, seven days per week. Each team would consist of two Health Care Support Workers who are trained to undertake observations and provide personal care and support to people to enable them to stay safely in their own home.</p>	<p>Opportunity identified within COTE/Frailty Redesign programme; activity proposed to be brought forward into winter activity to enable earlier benefits realisation (into 2023-24)</p> <p>T&F group established, draft JD developed.</p>	<p>Recruitment activity having a detrimental effect on other services</p> <p>Incremental gains in the early stages of the programme not realising full impact within winter period</p>	<p>Recruitment will be for a night contract only, which will minimise the staff pool interested, and therefore less likely to impact domiciliary care market</p>	<p>Keeping frail and/or elderly people at home reduces dependency on longer term social care services, increasing independence and quality of life.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Low</p>

<p>Same Day Emergency Care @ YYF</p> <p>The development of the SDEC treatment space alongside other improvements in AMU will ensure that YYF is in a position to meet the demand and requirements for the Caerphilly population, supporting whole system flow and optimising patient outcomes.</p>	<p>The workforce plan ensures that there is a robust medical and nursing team with joined up leadership across the front door currently being implemented.</p>	<p>Recruitment of staff for a 6-month pilot</p>	<p>Confirmation of interest in the posts from existing staff, opportunity to work in a new initiative service, delivering patient centre care</p>		<p>Medium</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Additional equipment for GWICES to facilitate hospital discharge</p> <p>Phase 1: Manual Handling (seating, hoists & stand aids) - £300,000</p> <p>Phase 2: Bettercare (showering, bathing including bariatric) - £100,000</p> <p>Phase 3 - Single handed care (Elks, slings, returns including bariatric) - £100,000</p>	<p>Understanding urgent requirements v standard requirements to ensure individuals receive equipment in an appropriately prioritised method.</p> <p>Phase 1 equipment procurement underway</p>	<p>Procurement of stock, potential supply chain issues</p>	<p>Phased procurement takes account of lead in timeframes</p>	<p>Avoidance of delays due to equipment availability</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Medium</p>

<p>Strengthened resource for Home First Service Existing home first resource from RGH & NHH spread to GUH. Proposal is to strengthen the capacity to reflect the 3 hospital model.</p>	<p>Agency staff secured to enable strengthened capacity over the winter period.</p>	<p>Ability to appoint staff, due to funding decision timeframes</p>		<p># Turnaround at front door Reduction in admissions</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>Staff support provided via Wellbeing Bus, able to be placed throughout the region and available to partnership organisations. The service offers a warm and personable welcome, light refreshments, a quiet zone, a colleague chat zone, chats with crew, and hospitality treats.</p>	<p>Tested within ABUHB. Staff spent 10-20 minutes on board; 100% found it valuable, and 97% indicated interest in further events. Proposed that the offer is widened to the partnership.</p>	<p>None known. Would need to consider where the bus can be placed regionally - needs electricity supply</p>	<p>Scoping to be undertaken within winter planning group on suitable locations for the wellbeing bus</p>	<p>Improved staff wellbeing</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Low</p>

Market Stability Report Summary 2022

Adult Services

- Care home market is currently stable, given the additional funding throughout the pandemic, however serious risks are present which threaten sustainability and stability due to fewer placements being made during the pandemic leading to an overprovision of places in some areas. Despite this the cost-of-living crises now threatens to bring further instability linked to funding.
- Workforce crisis threatens social care and domiciliary care in particular – recruitment and retention losses appear to be levelling off leaving some areas unable to cover all packages
- Growing recognition that the mental health of the workforce has been seriously affected by the pandemic and measures are needed to support the workforce.

Mental Health and Learning Disabilities

- Pandemic has had a significant impact on mental health support for adults and children particularly in the general population leading to increased waiting times for CAMHs
- Early intervention needs to be improved across all emotional wellbeing and mental health services
- A more diverse and responsive market for complex learning disabilities placements is needed in the region
- A focus on support for people with learning disabilities:
 - to live independently in their communities
 - earlier diagnosis of ASD required.

Children's Services

- Residential and foster care placements are currently unstable due to demand outstripping supply.
- Cost and outcomes of arranging residential placements and independent foster care placements are unsustainable and need to be improved leading to 'make or buy' decisions for future services
- Welsh Government's policy of 'removing the profit' from Children's Services will need careful management if the market is not to become further restricted/destabilised.

In Gwent, individuals have a choice as to the services available to meet their needs. However, the stability of the market is likely to be put to the test during financial year 2022/2023 as increasing cost pressures, allied to recruitment and retention difficulties will further expose the sector to increased levels of risk, this is especially so in the adult domiciliary and residential care markets.

Care Homes are currently able to meet the demand for the services, although a shortage of dementia care beds is of concern in some localities in the region. Domiciliary care services have reached critical levels due to staffing availability and providers continue to have issues with recruitment and retention. Currently the

demands for domiciliary care services are significant, with individuals choosing to remain at home if possible, and these demands are likely to exacerbate already strained resources. As community-based services continue to reopen following the COVID-19 pandemic, it is hoped that pressure on domiciliary care will alleviate somewhat.

In children's services, the external provider market is subject to instability caused by acquisitions and mergers. There is also currently a lack of competition and choice in the market and the costs and profits are significantly higher than they would be in a healthy, competitive marketplace.

Working throughout the pandemic in conjunction with partnership agencies, alongside independent providers within the care home and domiciliary care sector has required and allowed us to work differently and apply some creative commissioning in the best interest of our citizens. This has further strengthened the positive working relationships between health and social care and provider partners in the region.

The issues raised in this MSR will be picked up in the Area Plan and measures to mitigate threats to market stability will be outlined.

Agenda Item 12

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.02.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 15.02.23

Committee: **Cabinet**
Date of meeting: **1st March 2023**
Report Subject: **Regeneration and Community Services Performance Report**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Helen Cunningham, Deputy Leader/ Cabinet Member, Place and Environment**
Cllr John C. Morgan, Cabinet Member Place and Regeneration
Report Submitted by: **Ellie Fry, Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	12.1.23	14.02.23			31.1.23	01.03.23		

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To present the performance activity from April 2022 to September 2022 and highlight how the Department is contributing to four of the Council's Corporate aims of delivering a:

- Prosperous Wales
- Resilient Wales
- Healthier Wales
- More equal Wales
- Globally responsible Wales, and
- A Wales of more cohesive communities.

2. Scope and Background

2.1. The Regeneration and Community Services Department continue to focus on delivering a structured programme of work based around the priority areas identified in the Council's Corporate Plan 2022/27. The performance of the department is monitored throughout the financial year from April to March, with six monthly reports presented to the relevant Scrutiny Committee covering the following areas:

- Housing
- Employment and Skills
- Destination Management and Tourism
- Energy and Digital
- Town centres
- Improving the Local Environment;
- Managing Our Estate;
- Improving the Well-being and Resilience of our Communities;
- Healthy and Safe Communities; and
- Managing our Highways Network and Infrastructure.

- 2.2. The performance report makes reference to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which not only underpins the Council's aims, but also guides the ways in which sustainable development can be delivered through:
- Collaboration
 - Integration
 - Involvement
 - Long term
 - Prevention

- 2.3 A series of case studies are also included to highlight some of the work that has been delivered.

3. Options for Recommendation

- 3.1 The Place Scrutiny Committee recommended Option 1, that tourism in Blaenau Gwent be further developed in the area.

Option 1:

That Members consider the information provided within the appendix and also consider the scrutiny committee recommendation, to further develop tourism in Blaenau Gwent.

Option 2:

That Members accept the report as provided.

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

- 4.1. This proposal supports the Outcome Statements within the Corporate Plan. Corporate Plan 2022/27 Outcome Statements:

- Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent Support a fairer sustainable economy and community
- Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities
- Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient
- An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place

5. Implications Against Each Option

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

The portfolio has an annual revenue budget that it invests into the services it provides to the Communities in BG. Capital investment is also available for

specific projects through various grants or funding from the Council. The Directorate has some income generating capability and examines all practical forms of funding to support service delivery.

5.2. ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

There are no risks directly associated with this report

5.3. ***Legal***

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

5.4. ***Human Resources***

There are no additional implications for human resources.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1. ***Performance Information and Data***

The Performance report is attached.

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

Improved economy and community benefits from the work undertaken in the last 6 months

6.3. ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The strategy and action plan is designed to be a method to organise support to target areas of need identified through business and take account of changing and future business needs of Blaenau Gwent.

6.4. ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The areas of collaboration are outlined in the performance report.

6.5. ***Integration (across service areas)***

Integration is outlined in the performance report

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

Monitoring will be done through the Council's Corporate Plan and Service business plan

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Regeneration & Community Services Performance Report as at September 2022

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Regeneration & Community Services

Performance Report

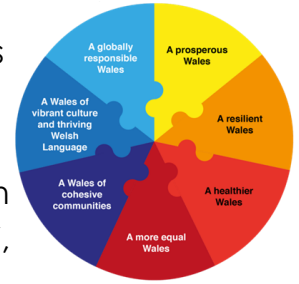


September 2022

Blaenau Gwent – a place that is fair, open and welcoming to all by working with and for our communities

Foreword

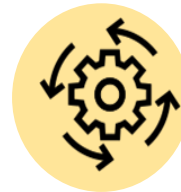
The purpose of this report is to present service activity which highlights how we are contributing to the Council's overall aim of delivering all seven national well-being goals.



The following overview pages set out Regeneration & Community Services performance for the period along with some associated achievements and challenges aligned to the priority areas identified in the Corporate Plan 2022/27, which are to :



Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent



An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place



Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities



Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient

This report is broken down into the themes below which have been identified for the Environment Services area and support delivery of the priority areas above:

- Improving the Local Environment;
- Managing Our Estate;
- Improving the Well-being and Resilience of our Communities;
- Healthy and Safe Communities; and
- Managing our Highways Network and Infrastructure.
- Housing;
- Employment and Skills;
- Destination Management and Tourism;
- Energy and Digital; and
- Town Centres.

Blaenau Gwent has a rich heritage and our buildings and countryside are part of Blaenau Gwent's attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit. Our local environment should be used to help improve the health and well-being of our families and communities and be enhanced for future generations to continue to enjoy. There is also a real desire to see the communities where people live kept clean, tidy and useable, creating areas that people can be proud of.



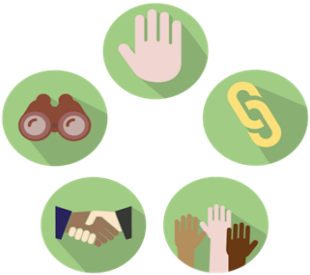
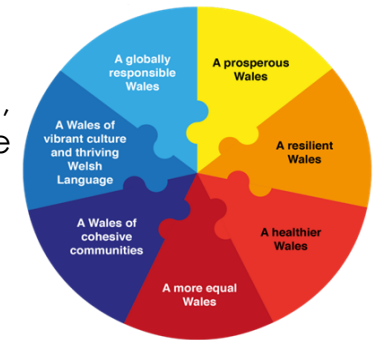
We will continue to invest in our neighbourhoods so that they are places where people are proud to live. We have prioritised economic development and regeneration in order to bring jobs, growth and opportunity to local people and businesses.

Increasing employability makes a fundamental contribution to reducing and tackling poverty and the economic status of the area. Supporting people to obtain and retain employment reduces reliance upon support services aligned to social well-being and poverty.



Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is legislation which aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The vision of this legislation is expressed in the seven National well-being goals.



The Act also puts a duty on public bodies to apply the sustainable development principle which states they 'must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

The sustainable development principle is made up of the following five ways of working, pictured below:



Collaboration



Integration



Involvement



Long Term



Prevention

Throughout this report some areas of performance that meet these ways of working are demonstrated by the above images.



Town Centres



Following the exterior of **Trinity Chapel, Abertillery**

being originally refurbished, Blaenau Gwent Council is working with Aneurin Leisure Trust and the Welsh Government to bring the Chapel back into community use. Funding is being sought from the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Programme for an internal refit of the landmark building, turning it into a new home for the **town's Library and Adult Education Courses**. If the funding application is successful it is expected that works will begin Spring 2023.



Work on **Ebbw Vale Placemaking Plan** was approved by the Council's Executive Committee in December 2021. Work has continued on the delivery plan during 2022 and the next stage of work will be to undertake further stakeholder engagement on potential projects to be taken forward for implementation. Further consultation will also take place with the Design Commission for Wales.

Funding was secured to undertake a **placemaking plan** for **Abertillery** and consultants have been appointed to help with its development. Initial stakeholder engagement has been undertaken to start to shape the placemaking plan and based on lessons learned for the other placemaking plans earlier stakeholder consultation will be undertaken on potential options. This will be scheduled to take place in late 2022/early 2023.

The **Brynmawr Placemaking Plan** has also been progressed and builds upon the Brynmawr and Nantyglo Masterplan that was approved in late 2020. The placemaking plan will seek to recognise the commercial developments that have taken place on the periphery of the Town Centre and consider how these developments can become better connected and support the long term viability of Brynmawr Town Centre.

Work on the **Tredegar Placemaking Plan** has continued and the placemaking plan is scheduled to be submitted to the Place Scrutiny Committee for approval in November 2022. Initial consultation has been undertaken with the Design Commission for Wales.





Energy and Digital



LONG TERM - As a council we aim to develop effective digital infrastructure and improve connectivity within the borough by promoting digital participation. Within Planning Services we are looking to improve and streamline processes and data storage/accessibility resulting in a more efficient and effective way of working.

Following a detailed analysis of available systems and procurement process a **preferred supplier** has been identified as **Idox** and we are now moving to complete the procurement process by the end of quarter 3. This new planning system will enable us to have a web presence where the public can view and comment on planning applications online. Customers can also book Building Regulations appointments on line. By having a web presence we improve our customer services and can streamline processes more effectively.



Wind Generation

Projects are ongoing. A planning application has been submitted for the installation of a wind turbine at Silent Valley former landfill site. The application is being considered by Planning Officers and will go through the normal determination process. Work will be undertaken on a business case for investment alongside the planning process. If planning consent is achieved the Council will be asked to consider a business case for investment.



Hydro Generation

- Initial investigation and feasibility studies for small scale hydro generation opportunities within the wards of Cwm and Llanhilleth presented two sites with some potential for hydro generation. These were presented to Scrutiny and Executive for consideration and it was determined that the potential returns and payback were not sufficiently positive for the projects to be developed further at this time.

Funding is being sought to further develop the feasibility of a hydro generation scheme at Silent Valley. If the funding is secured work will be undertaken to investigate the option to utilise hydro generation to power electric pumps.

Opportunities to utilise Community Municipal Investment as a way of funding **green energy related investment projects** within Blaenau Gwent will be explored going forward.



The **Refit** programme continues, installing energy efficiency measures throughout the borough.





Energy and Digital

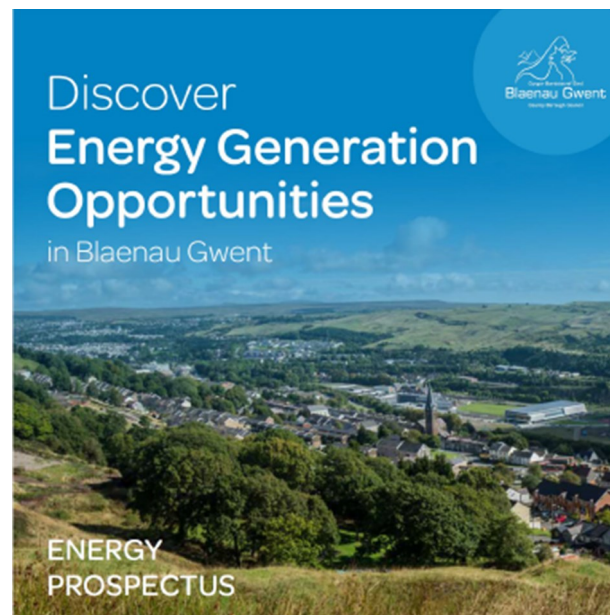


Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure – An initial Gwent project led by Blaenau Gwent installed a total of **73 charge points across 35 sites** in Gwent. We have also worked with Cardiff Capital Region City Deal on a number of projects to install further EV infrastructure across the region. This has included the **installation of a EV infrastructure at further 12 sites across in Blaenau Gwent.**

A further regional bid for funding has been submitted to the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) and if funding is agreed this will increase EV infrastructure across the region further.



Cardiff Capital Region City Deal secured funding from Welsh Government to **install rapid charge points for taxi ranks and to purchase 44 wheelchair accessible electric taxis for trials** to take place across the region. The taxis were to be offered under a 30 day free trial for taxi drivers. **Two** of the 44 **taxis have been made available for Blaenau Gwent** and the trial will run until 30th November 2023.



In addition, the Council received a **£300,000 grant** from the Welsh Government towards the costs of **increasing Council EV charging infrastructure.** The scheme administered by Welsh Local Government Association requires a Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Transition Plan to be developed. This will build on work already undertaken to develop an Ultra Low Emission Fleet plan. Some of the funding will be utilised to provide EV charging infrastructure to support the running of new electric vans that are being procured for the Community Meals service.



Destination Management & Tourism



The **Destination Management Plan 2020-25** is the strategic document that sets out our vision for a visitor-focussed way forward for tourism development in the area. It's main output is a Destination Action Plan which sets out practical steps that if taken forward jointly by all stakeholders, can make a positive difference; improving the quality of the visitor experience and growing the visitor economy.

Wales online listed **SIRHOWY IRONWORKS** as one of the [25 incredible ancient monuments with mind-blowing history you can visit in Wales - Wales Online](#)



Blogger visit in July covering camping, adventure activities, walking and food. Partnership project with Southern Wales. Stayed at Parc Bryn Bach Camp site. Visited Guardian, Tredegar Arms, and took a walk, a dip in the lake at PBB and evening meal at Tredegar Arms. [Sheep Walking to Forest Bathing- Southern Wales on a Budget \(wordpress.com\)](#)
[A Welsh Adventure Itinerary \(wordpress.com\)](#)



Weatherman walking – Brynmawr to Abergavenny screened on BBC1. Repeat showings of 2 previous episodes in Blaenau Gwent



Out and about in the bountiful valleys of Blaenau Gwent



New destination page on Visit Wales web site [Things to do in Blaenau Gwent | Visit Wales](#)



Developed new brochure for Travel Trade for Guardian and Abertillery. Short print run and digital.



Destination Management & Tourism



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



AberFest held and Winterfest preparations in hand.

Steel House Festival held. Very successful with increased camping, glamping and attendance.



Launch of new Wales Events Strategy featured Steelhouse to highlight the importance of home grown events.

We aim to bring Community and Business Tourism to Blaenau Gwent— Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events. Improvements to the transport network give the ideal platform to fully embrace the opportunities that exist.

Jan Kjellström International Festival of Orienteering 2022 event successfully hosted in Blaenau Gwent.



The Bevan Festival was held, incorporating a week of events celebrating Nye, political, union history of Tredegar and the South Wales Valleys that gave us the NHS. Extended to family Day at Parc Bryn Bach and Music event at Bedwellty Park





Employment and Skills



Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme -

Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme – Recruitment and Induction of apprentices continues to be successful and there are currently 21 apprentices based within Manufacturing companies in Blaenau Gwent.....



Aspire Blaenau Gwent & Merthyr Tydfil's Shared Apprenticeship Programme won the Large Employer of the Year award in 2021— on the back of winning the award – **Aspire have been awarded further funding for the next 2 years from Welsh Government to facilitate apprenticeships across Blaenau Gwent South East & Mid Wales** Alongside this Aspire are now working Cardiff Capital City Region and have received funding to support this expansion.

16 internal apprentices are now employed by Blaenau Gwent in varying departments

4 Apprenticeships in Sogefi Filtration – Engineering & Logistics

1 apprentice at central fire & security

5 apprentices linked to new vacancies

Legacy funding has been secured to fund the Aspire internal Mentor to facilitate apprenticeships

1 Apprentice at Camtonics completing an engineering apprenticeship

3 apprentices at Continental inc engineering and Lab Technician

1 engineering apprentice at CES LTD

Runner up in **NTFW Awards** - Tomorrows Talent 2022



5 apprentices PCI inc Lab Technician and varying STEM pathways

1 apprentice in PMB

1 apprentice in Express contract drying



Discussions with Welsh Government to expand the Aspire offering and demonstrate demand for digital & engineering degree apprenticeships have taken place during the reporting period.



Employment and Skills



Refurbishment of the Monwell Building into a New High Value Engineering Centre (HiVE)

The Tech Valleys programme has a vision;

"In 2027 the South Wales Valleys and Blaenau Gwent in particular, will be a globally recognised centre for the development of new technologies, to support cutting edge industry"

In support of this vision BGCBC and Coleg Gwent have proposed to develop an Advanced Engineering Centre which will create an environment that will attract hi-tech inward investors within the Advanced Manufacturing sector.



- The proposed date to be operational and welcoming first students is anticipated to be Easter 2024
- Business case submitted to UK Gov. Levelling up Fund for the associated refurbishment cost – announcement to be made late Jan 2023

Kick Start Plus

is aimed at supporting new businesses from 6 months up to 3 years old, to help them develop and expand. The implementation of the programme is very successful with the

delivery of over 100 placements

and the team are looking to develop another programme alongside SPF funding from March 2023



COLLABORATION - The Employment and Skills Strategy

has been produced and agreed; The plan will provide opportunities to raise aspirations and support economic growth through partnership working. It outlines a range of priorities to ensure individuals and businesses have access to the right support in terms of skills and employment.

Community Benefits

Links with local community groups continue to be established to understand and record local need. This allows opportunities in the area to be effectively matched with known local need when contracts are awarded.

A number of benefits have been achieved during the reporting period some of which are shown later in the document.



Housing



We are committed to the regeneration and economic future of Blaenau Gwent and to working with partners to bring disused sites in the county borough back into use.



Pithead Baths, Llanhilleth - Consultation and updating is continuing with residents. Support has been gained from Welsh Government – through the Land Release fund, to purchase the Pit Head Baths and to carry out preliminary studies due to the building being inhabited by bats. Project ongoing.



Six Bells Colliery - Following consultation in 2021, site was considered for various options including a Social Services project. A partner Registered Social Landlord (RSL) have expressed developing the site as a mixed tenure development.

Ashvale - Funds secured from Cardiff City Region to bring forward some **54 homes**. Currently within the planning process

Sofrydd Garage - Privately owned, placed the owner in touch with a partner Registered Social Landlord but no further commitment to development.

Abertillery Leisure Centre - Social Housing Grant allocated to the project for 2023/24, with partner RSL Melin. **Circa 18 affordable homes**, being worked up.





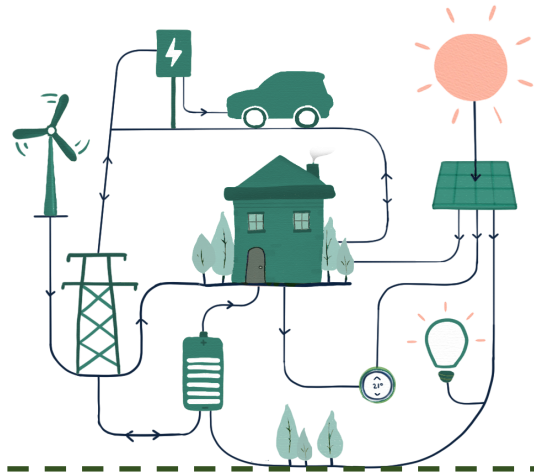
Housing



The Council works to improve homes across Blaenau Gwent with the aim of increasing energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty.

The following scheme targets improvements to Social rented homes, bringing together home improvements and clever technologies to make these homes as easy and cheap to heat as possible.

Making homes more energy efficient helps to tackle the climate emergency and also helps people living in poverty save money on energy bills.



► **The Optimised Retrofit Programme**, funded by Welsh Government was introduced this year as part of the Innovative Housing Programme – Funding, direct to Registered Social Landlords, is there to **improve the energy efficiency and reduction of fuel poverty of social rented homes in Blaenau Gwent**. All 4 partner Registered Social Landlords in Blaenau Gwent are taking part. (tai Calon, Linc Cymru, United Welsh and Melin)

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The Social Housing Grant Programme supports delivery of affordable housing provision. In 2022/23 an increased Social Housing Grant award of **£7m** has been allocated to Blaenau Gwent to support delivery of social housing. This will be maintained at this rate until 2024/25



Works at **Greenacres, Tredegar and Golwg Y Bryn, Ebbw Vale** have now been fully completed

Ebbw Vale School Site
named **Cefn Y Garn** -

- Open Market (Persimmon) site in partnership with United Welsh. **A total of 277 units** which will be build out in 4 phases. **34 units have already been handed over to residents** with another 24 units due late December 2022. Of the 277 units **55 are social rented** – which we have supported with Welsh Government Social Housing Grant.

The three social housing grant funded projects shown here will deliver

107 Social Rent properties; and **292 Open Market** properties





Improving the local Environment



Our recycling performance target figure is 70% and Stats Wales shows that our 2021/22 performance places us **at 65%**

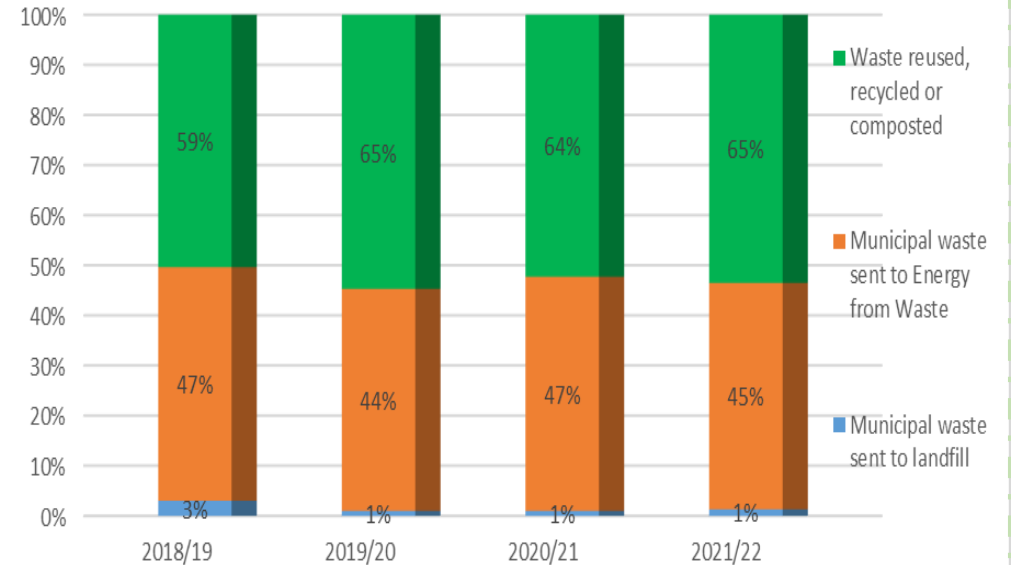


Welsh Government set a statutory recycling target of recycling 70% by 2024-25, towards which Blaenau Gwent has made significant moves in the direction of achieving over the last few years.



67.8%
of waste produced in Quarter 1 of 2022/23.

What happens to our waste?



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Work with schools has continued in respect of the Keep Wales Tidy "Spring Clean" Initiative with **30 workshops** being held over the period.

Also **4 community litter picks** have been held where **2471 bags** of **general waste** and **248 bags** of **recycling** was collected



Recycling promotion work is on-going with monitoring of Round 1 utilising Keeping up with the Joneses process underway.





Improving the local Environment



For the 3rd year, funding has been secured for **town centre clean-ups** through the Caru Cymru programme and Keep Britain Tidy.

Clean-ups will be carried out during quarter 3



A Battery Trail / campaign will commence early 2023 in collaboration with WRAP with the aim to increase tonnage of batteries collected at the kerbside, To support this, work is ongoing to evaluate the amount of batteries currently collected at the kerbside prior to the trial / campaign commencing in order to provide a baseline for review.

- Two of the transition pathways identified within the Decarbonisation plan directly relate to waste:
- Transport direct – transition to ultra-low emission vehicles and the related infrastructure;
 - Waste – working towards zero waste and a circular economy.

Ultra-low emission vehicles have been trialled with front line services

and will be considered with the fleet replacement programme. However,

the new Centre of Operations is integral to Blaenau Gwent achieving a low carbon fleet

as we cannot transition to a low emission fleet without the appropriate infrastructure in place to support it. Significant funding will, however, be required in order to deliver the transition to ultra-low emission vehicles.



New Centre of Operations Plan Image





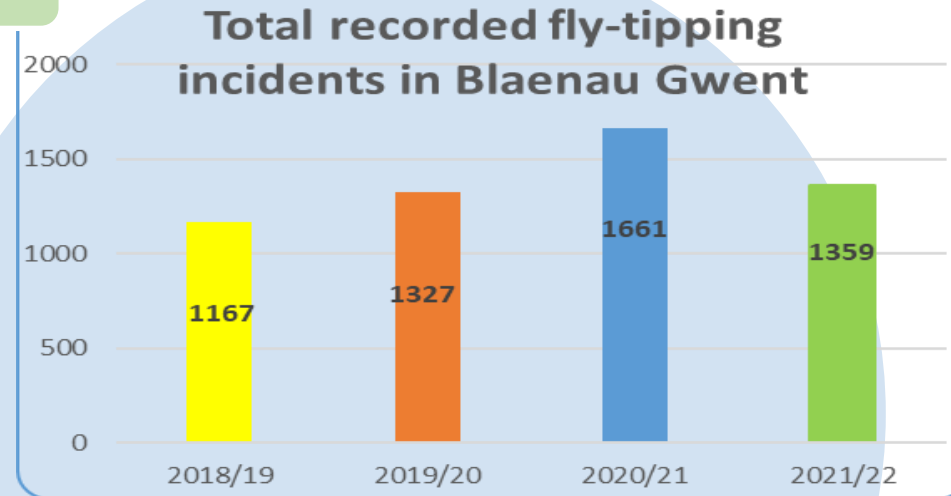
Improving the local Environment



Monitoring of excess side waste has continued across the County Borough throughout the reporting period along with the utilisation of statutory powers to deal with waste misplaced for collection.



Preventative focus -The Frontline Enforcement service will be utilising CCTV to target highway lay-bys subject to prolific fly tipping, proactively carrying commercial waste disposal checks and proactively targeting known unofficial domestic waste collection locations to reduce and prevent negative behaviours in the Community.



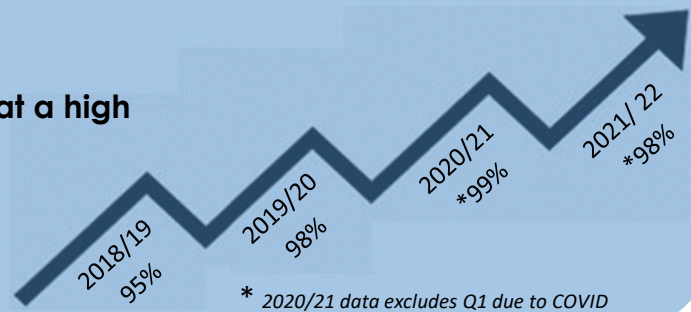
484 Fly-tipping incidents were reported during Quarter 1 & 2 2022, the average number of days taken to clear was **3.8 days**

The numbers of recorded fly-tipping incidents decreased in 2021/22 for the first time in 6 years



During the period April to September 2022, **90 streets** were **inspected** by Blaenau Gwent Officers / Keep Wales Tidy.

Of these **99%** were rated **at a high or acceptable standard on cleanliness.**



During the **Quarter 1 & 2** period (April to September 2022) there were **30 fixed penalty notices** issued for **Fly Tipping**



Managing Our Estate



A long term programme of works continues across the Blaenau Gwent estate to reduce the annual carbon emissions and energy costs of our buildings.

VITCC— A new Photovoltaic (PV) system was installed on the roof of the VITCC building in 2019 and will save approximately 9303 kilograms of CO2 per year.



Some new builds have had new photo voltaic systems installed as shown here on the VITECC and Ebbw Vale Leisure Centre



Ebbw Vale Sports Centre—A new Photovoltaic (PV) system was installed on the roof in 2020 and saves approximately 67,895 kilograms of CO2 per year.



And a boiler replacement programme of works is continuing across our school buildings

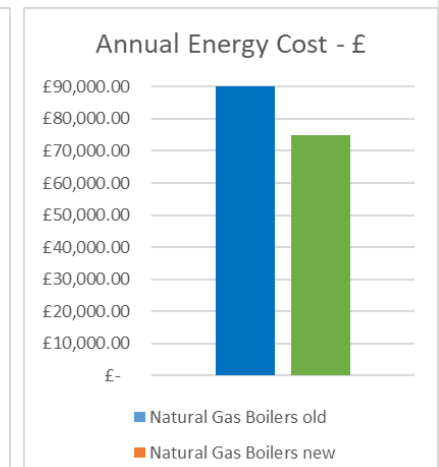
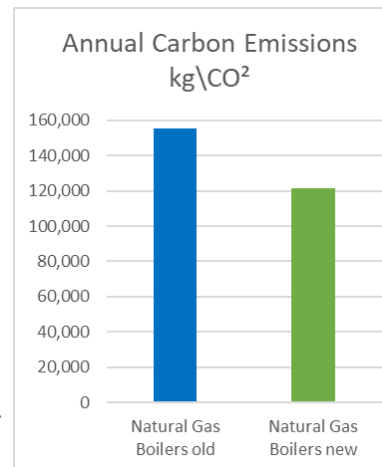
Roseheyworth Primary School

The original heating system had a seasonal efficiency of approximately 75% (E rated).

The old system was replaced with two A rated condensing boilers with a seasonal efficiency of 96% (A rated). The existing hot water calorifier was also replaced along with a new mains gas connection and new flue.



The average differences in running costs and CO2 emissions between the old and new appliances using the predicted rise to 13.33p per kW in the cost for gas for 2023-24 can be seen here :





Managing Our Estate



For 2022/23 financial year here has been almost

£800,000

allocated in the Councils Capital Programme for the

Cemetery Capacity Works

associated with Cefn Golau, Dukestown, Brynmawr and Brynithel Cemeteries.



PREVENTION - We continue to manage Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to deal with stormwater locally (as close its source as possible), to mimic natural drainage and encourage its infiltration, attenuation and passive treatment . **All SuDS applications, enquiry responses and inspections are ongoing throughout the borough. Various meetings with developers to discuss regulations and options available to developers.**



Progress continues to deliver the Councils

Flood Management Plan

and natural flood risk management continues .

Other works to support this during the period include:-

New drainage to alleviate flooding has been completed at Newchurch Rd / Beaufort Terrace Roundabout.

Investigations relating to flood incidents and requests for assistance ongoing at Pantypwryn Rd, Reservoir Rd, and Brynithel Estate.

Ongoing Schemes include Glanfrwyd Avenue, Ebbw Vale, culvert renewal (waiting for commencement date). Trash screen renewal at Newchurch Rd. (waiting for commencement date).



Improving the Well-being and Resilience of our Communities



In order to enhance and stimulate economic development within the Borough it has been identified that it is a priority to improve the corporate commercial property portfolio

Tredegar Business Park and Pond Road employment units awaiting funding confirmation from **Welsh Government**

Regain 2 -The team are working with Tech Valleys to develop an Enterprise Hub for Blaenau Gwent. The development is currently named Regain 2. The facility will support individuals and new businesses by creating a managed workspace with hot and warm desk spaces and will also include separate offices for hire on the first floor. Meetings have been held with various stakeholders to develop business case and consider management options.

The Welsh Government is set to **build a 52,582 sq. ft. manufacturing unit at the Rhyd y Blew industrial site at Ebbw Vale** as part of plans to develop the remaining 30 acres available on the site. **Work to build the RYB1 unit will commenced Autumn 2022** and will be available to let in the second half of 2023

REGAIN2



REGAIN2 works commenced on site during this period and are proceeding well.

With the anticipated contract sum being £5,484,996.99



Improving the Well-being and Resilience of our Communities



The Greater Gwent Nature Recovery Action Plan



A Nature Recovery Action Plan for the Greater Gwent Area

The final full month of the Welsh Government ENRAW funded **Resilient Greater Gwent project** saw actions associated with the **Nature Recovery Action Plan** being implemented in addition to coordination of Gwent wide activities on urban biodiversity, sustainable communities, rivers and invasive non native species.

Resilient Greater Gwent - Gwent wide collaborative project supporting Ecology, Invasive Species & Sustainable Communities which Blaenau Gwent acted as lead authority on concluded in July and project monitoring and evaluation was collaborated upon.



A Resilient Greater Gwent

The Active Travel grant programme has been awarded and progressed

Scheme	funding	Update
Ebbw Vale Town Centre Sustainable Link - WelTAG (250k)	£250,000.00	Consultants commissioned for the development of WelTAG stage 3 (business case for scheme including preliminary design and illustrations)
A4047 Toucan Crossing Design & Installation	£80,000.00	Detailed design has been carried out in-house with costs estimates developed. In process of tendering for work.
Future Routes Audit	£40,000.00	Commissioned via Sustrans work has commenced and ongoing.
Cycle Barrier Audit	£7,200.00	Commissioned via Sustrans.
Abertillery Shared Use Upgrade	£60,000.00	Initial scoping commissioned (ecology and trees)
AT Monitoring	£30,000.00	Equipment and service contract to linetop for people counters. Engagement
Minor Works	£25,000.00	Ad hoc works undertaken (e.g. drop kerbs)
Glyncoed Ebbw Vale - upgrade footpath	£267,000.00	Design work and preliminaries completed, currently tendering for physical work
	£759,200.00	

ACTIVE TRAVEL

INVOLVEMENT - Wales biodiversity week was used to promote the Greater Gwent Nature Recovery Action Plan, presentation being delivered at conference.



COLLABORATION - Collaborative work under the Gwent Green Grid Project's 'Nature isn't Neat' strand to improve grassland management and pollinators has been progressed, cutting regimes on verges being altered for ecological improvement.





Improving the Well-being and Resilience of our Communities



49 events were delivered to schools regarding **Natural Resource Management**

School	Number of pupils	Number of events
Blaen Y Cwm	193	9
Glanhowy	153	7
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg	47	2
Ebbw Fawr Primary Phase	144	6
Pen Y Cwm	29	3
Beaufort Hill	103	5
Sofrydd	12	1
St Mary's CiW	112	4
Willowtown	143	6
Coed Y Garn	84	3
Deighton	23	1
SHEP Roseheyworth	25	1
SHEP Willowtown	51	1

with a total of **1143 children benefiting** from these events



Pupils from Blaen Y Cwm and Deighton Primary took part in a **Bug Bonanza workshop** exploring insects and other small creatures in the school

grounds and from the local area.

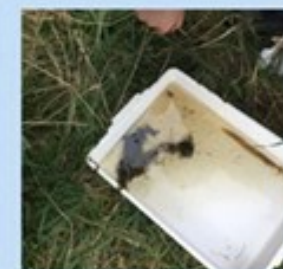


Beaufort Hill pupils wanted to discuss **ways of managing the school grounds for wildlife.**

Pupils from Ebbw Fawr, Beaufort Hill and Willowtown Primary all took part in a **Super Seed workshop** where we took a close look at seeds from trees locally and in the school grounds.



Pupils pond dipping





Healthy and Safe Communities



Development of a Strategic document and action plan which will assist the Council to transition to a Homeless Rapid Re-Housing Approach. Rapid Rehousing is a recognised approach which ensures that anyone experiencing homelessness can move into a settled home as quickly as possible, rather than staying in temporary accommodation for long periods of time.



Successfully carried out **2 member briefings** in relation to Homelessness and the Housing Waiting List.



HOMELESSNESS - During the reporting period, 94 households met the threshold for being threatened with homelessness. Of these, 60 were successfully prevented from losing their accommodation - 64%. This high prevention rate has been achieved by targeting early intervention initiatives to prevent homelessness at a very early stage.



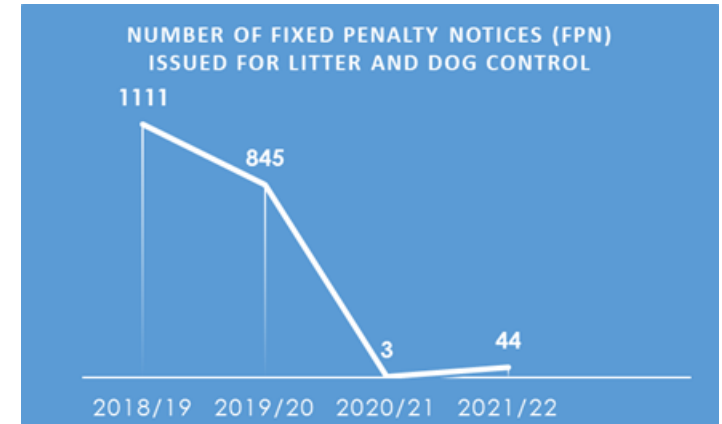
LONG TERM - It is a priority for us to raise the profile of Play by improving the quality and equity of play provision throughout the Borough for all our children and young people. To achieve this we are looking to refurbish and maintain existing play provision to acceptable levels and develop new initiatives based on identified need within the Borough.

Chartist way play area has been confirmed as needing to be relocated and tender for the works (value £120,000) was returned in September 2022.

Ongoing discussions have been held regarding Garnlydan play area with the MP, Tai Calon and the community.

A play company provided some outline schemes as requested for discussion.

During the reporting period a public consultation relating to a new Public Space Protection Order for Dog Controls commenced.



The **Fixed Penalty Enforcement Litter and Dog Control Service** was **suspended** in March 2020 due to the pandemic. Interaction with multiple clients needed to be avoided and also lockdown restrictions meant a reduction in littering. **The 2020/21 figure of 3 in the table above reflects this service suspension due to Covid 19.** Service reinstatement 6th September 2021.

During the **Quarter 1 & 2** period

(April to September 2022) there were

158 fixed penalty notices

issued for **litter**

and **19** for **dog control.**





Healthy and Safe Communities



The **Transitional Capital Funding Programme** – supported Tai Calon and Linc Cymru with funding bids to **refurbish 4 empty homes for Ukrainian Families**.

1 of which was accommodated in Q2.



We have successfully recruited an Environmental Health Officer and an Environmental Health Technician this period.

The completion of the draft

2021 Air Quality

Assessment has

now been

completed and

submitted to

Welsh

Government



Blaenau Gwent are continuing to provide support to the resettlement scheme for Ukrainian people. Once in initial accommodation, Ukrainian arrivals are supported to resettle into more medium and longer-term 'hosting' accommodation within communities. **Blaenau Gwent Council is working to seek new expression of interest hosts, and then inspect relevant properties to ensure they are safe and suitable.**

Cllr Steve Thomas, Leader of Blaenau Gwent Council says:

"On behalf of the local authority I would like to express a heartfelt thank you to hosts who are already supporting Ukrainians. It is heartening to see how the scheme continues to generate so much local support - which is testament to the level of generosity and goodwill within our communities."

The support hosts have extended to those fleeing the conflict in Ukraine has contributed to an astonishing national movement which has helped families rebuild their lives - for children to resume their education, for Ukrainians to find employment - and to forge lifelong friendships, but with hundreds more Ukrainians still residing in Welcome Centres we are seeking additional hosts."

UKRAINE
How you can help





Healthy and Safe Communities



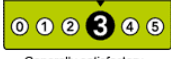
Urgent improvement necessary



Major improvement necessary



Improvement necessary



Generally satisfactory



Good



Very good

Blaenau Gwent's **Food Hygiene** Service have been required to ensure that all high risk establishments (with the exception of broadly complaint C-rated premises) have received an inspection by the close of September 2022 (end of Quarter 2). We are pleased to report that we have met this challenging target with a **total of 82 interventions** having been completed, alongside our other continuing programmed and reactive workload.

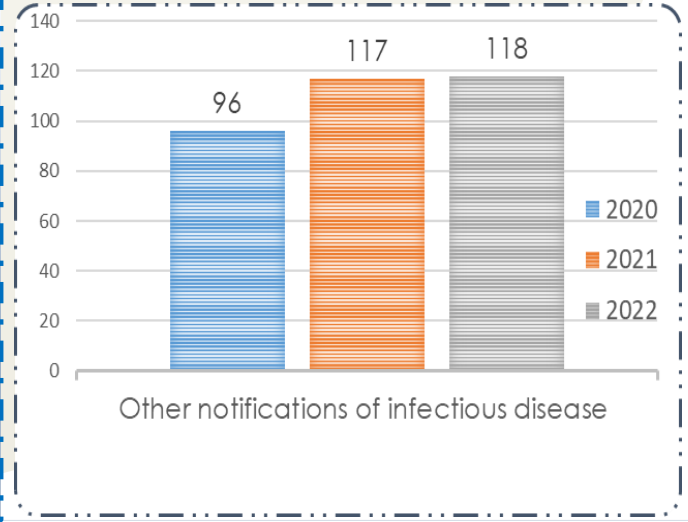
We continued to see new food business start-ups during the pandemic. **215 new food businesses were identified during 2020/2021, 231 during 2021/22 and 230 during Quarters 1 to 3 of 2022/23.** This was a mixture of existing businesses changing ownership and new start-ups. In-line with the FSA COVID-19 recovery plan we have risk rated the new businesses to ensure that those presenting the highest potential risk have continued to receive an inspection. Between the 1st April 2020 to the end of Quarter 3 2022 we have **completed 357 new business inspections.** We have continued to provide advice to the other remaining businesses wherever possible. We currently have **49 new businesses awaiting an inspection** of which approximately half of these are likely to be lower risk premises based on the initial intelligence gathered.

In addition to the above the Commercial Team continue to respond to other notifications of infectious disease for which the Local Authority have a duty to investigate. The number of recent reports of such infectious disease cases are provided here together with comparisons from previous reporting year periods (note these indicate Q1-3 only and do not include any requests for advice in respect of COVID-19):

Infectious Disease:

In-line with current operational arrangements across Gwent we continue to provide a limited COVID-19 response. Environmental Health Contractors operating within the Commercial Team, Public Protection provide expert support and guidance to the Gwent Contact Tracing Team. The Contact Tracing Team, with the support of Environmental Health, continue to provide notification and guidance in respect of positive cases at vulnerable settings such as residential and nursing homes. The contractors also continue to support internal colleagues where requests for advice are made or changes to guidance identified and we continue to respond to any requests for advice from businesses, childminders, etc.

These contractors have also recently been utilised to support our colleagues in Education to implement the recent guidance from Public Health Wales in terms of action and response to any identified Strep A and Scarlet Fever cases





Healthy and Safe Communities



Trading Standards aims to ensure a fair, safe and equitable environment for all who purchase and sell goods and services in Blaenau Gwent. This is undertaken through a range of intervention, advice and enforcement activities with businesses and consumers. The Team works closely with partner agencies in order to gather intelligence and enforce the legislation covering areas such as Weights and Measures / Food Labelling and composition / Counterfeit Goods/ Product Safety / Pricing/ Rogue Trading and Doorstep Crime /Consumer Credit/ Misdescribed Goods /Scams and Age Restricted Sales. More information on the work of Trading Standards can be obtained at

[:About Trading Standards | Blaenau Gwent CBC \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/about-trading-standards)

<https://tradingstandards.gov.wales/>



PREVENTION — Trading Standards activity contributes to crime reduction and protection of vulnerable people from scams and rogue traders. Intervention visits were made to **100%** (32) of identified vulnerable potential scam victims during the period.

Seizures of Illegal Vape Products -

The Trading Standards Team recently visited 78 premises in the County Borough which were identified as likely to be selling disposable e-cigarettes/vapes. These visits resulted in a total



of 1499 disposable vapes being seized from 13 premises because

they failed to comply with a number of relevant product safety regulations. 674 of these were disposed of in November (photograph attached) following consultation with BG Waste/Recycling Section. The remainder are subject to ongoing work.

Trading Standards- Recent Raids -

Trading Standards Officers recently executed warrants to seize goods at 4 residential addresses in Blaenau Gwent. Working with partner agencies such as Gwent Police and Tai Calon, various goods were seized including counterfeit clothes, trainers and bags and sales records bearing various brand names - Armani, Nike, Northface, Balenciaga, Louis V.

Boxes of fireworks were also seized from properties which had been illegally stored in unsafe conditions and sold online.





Managing our Highways Network and Infrastructure



Senedd approved new legislation on 12th July 2022 that will

lower the speed limit from 30mph to **20mph** on residential roads and busy pedestrian streets;

This will **come into effect** **17th September 2023.**



LONG TERM - Investment in the residential highway network is identified to ensure sustainability for the future, bringing our roads up to a good standard and improving our highway infrastructure to meet the service requirements of the future.

The current gross replacement value of the Highway Network is estimated at £1.093 billion and is the Authority's most valuable material asset



Work is ongoing with dataMap Wales to finalise exception maps which will show which roads are to default to 20mph and those that will remain 30mph) when completed this will be hosted on our website so residents can view.



Surveys have been commissioned for the collection of data in relation to speed signs and road markings and for the digitisation of our existing Moving Traffic Orders. Design work has commenced for new signage and road markings, we will be looking to award a contract early spring for the works to commence.



Managing our Highways Network and Infrastructure



Ebbw Vale's historic Big Arch has been restored -

The Big Arch in Ebbw Vale, one of the largest early horse-drawn railway bridges in Britain symbolising the town's place in the history of iron and steel making in Wales, has been restored to its former glory.

Constructed in 1813, Big Arch was once the northern gateway to the Ebbw Vale Ironworks and then in later years to the sprawling Ebbw Vale Steelworks. It is now one of the few surviving tangible reminders of the area's rich industrial past.

In order to bring the 200 year old structure back to a safe condition the following works were undertaken at a cost of approximately £1.2 Million. These works commenced early January 2022 and allowed the road underneath the arch to be reopened early September 2022:-

- Removal of the temporary crash deck.
- Interstitial grouting through the masonry arch barrel to provide a waterproof barrier and prevent further delamination of the stonework and wash out of the mortar joints.
- Installing a grid system of reinforcement bars into the masonry arch barrel to pin and stabilize the masonry arch.
- Undertaking masonry repairs to the arch barrel, elevations, and upper arches.
- Waterproofing and repairing the brick pavements on both elevations of the arch.
- Removing the excess vegetation from the structure

BIG ARCH NORTH



BIG ARCH SOUTH





Case Study - Go Wild 2022



Go Wild is a public engagement event held on alternate years by Caerphilly County Borough Council or Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. In 2022 it was held on Saturday 28th May 2022 in Parc Bryn Bach.

The event was predominantly organised by one officer with support from other officers, partners and funders.

- **31 organisations attended.**
- **49% of visitors were from the immediate local area**
- **92% of respondents said they had been inspired to take action for an ecosystem resilient Gwent**
- **On the day there was an estimated 2000 visitors.**
- **99% of visitors would recommend the event to friends or family**



Just over half of respondents stayed for longer than 3 hours. This demonstrates the quality of the event and how it engages visitors. We asked visitors what they enjoyed. The word cloud below shows their responses, the larger the word, the more it was included in the responses:

The event is a success; engaging thousands of people with wildlife and nature in Blaenau Gwent and across the Greater Gwent region.

It was great that so many people attended the event. Well done to you all.

I thought the event was terrific and the obvious hard work by the team really payed off with so much interest being shown by the public. Well done and congratulations to everybody concerned.

Thanks for having GWT there. We engaged with 59 individuals and gained 6 new members

What an absolutely BRILLIANT job you all did on Saturday. It was a fantastic event. Everything went perfectly, thanks to all the hard work you put in beforehand





Case Study - Next-generation 5G immersive environment



New technology like 5G could help provide new opportunities for education in Wales, according to a new trial which launched today (10 March). 5G Wales Unlocked is the innovation project behind the new immersive 360-degree immersive environment in Ebbw Vale – just one of several trials demonstrating how ultrafast technology like 5G could transform rural communities, from powering tech innovations in agriculture, to improving rural transport and education and bolstering the tourism industry. Using a localised 5G network by project partners BT, the



classroom uses the high-speed connectivity to project inspiring and educational video content onto all four walls in a 360-degree format, providing an immersive experience. School lessons can be delivered across a variety of curriculum-related themes —taking children and young people on a journey of the senses as they 'dive' into the detail of a plant cell or explore the surface of a planet.

Page 153

What's more, the experience isn't limited only to the pupils using the Immersive Environment. Thanks to the ultrafast 5G connection, live link-ups have also been established — allowing learners to discover the fascinating history of heritage sites such as Raglan Castle, with a live virtual tour from a Cadw custodian located at the site. The live link-ups, using Cisco technology, can also be used to connect classrooms across the country — meaning pupils can work collaboratively with other learners, and educators can enhance their own lessons in partnership with other schools.

Minister for Education and Welsh Language, Jeremy Miles MS, said: *"It's fantastic to see learners in Ebbw Vale benefitting from next-generation technology, thanks to this innovative project. It's our ambition to see Wales leading the way in using digital technology to deliver high-quality education, and to raise attainment and skills of all learners, regardless of background. This trial will help learners in rural areas engage with the curriculum in an exciting, immersive environment."*

Nick Speed, BT Group Director in Wales, said: *"We're excited to be part of this pioneering project looking at the potential of 5G in rural areas. The immersive classroom is a brilliant example of how 5G's greater bandwidth can help deliver rich, high quality content to inspire school pupils about the world, wherever they're located. It has the potential to reduce the education gap between areas and make sure that all pupils have access to this kind of innovative learning material."*

Peter Shearman, Head of Innovation for Cisco UKI, said: *"We believe in an inclusive future for everyone. This is especially important in education, where digital has become such an important part of teaching and learning. Cisco is delighted to have invested in the collaboration platform for these schools in the valleys and rural south Wales as part of the 5G Wales Unlocked project."*

5G Wales Unlocked has been made possible by funding from the Welsh Government's Tech Valleys Programme and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

Case Study -

With a growing need for STEM knowledge and skills in the local economy, there is a need to educate the workforce of the future in a dedicated facility where learners will be surrounded by innovation and technology reflective of industry. We are therefore working in partnership with Coleg Gwent, Welsh Government, Tech Valleys, and education, to create a new High Value Engineering (HiVE) Centre in Ebbw Vale is due to open at the former Monwel factory site in the near future pending funding approval.

The **£12.5 million investment** will deliver an Advanced Engineering Centre close to our Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone campus, which will offer high-quality engineering education to equip young people with skills for the future.

The project involves A full refurbishment of the Former Monwell Building located on Letchworth Road, Ebbw Vale to create a state-of-the-art, carbon-neutral and entirely digital education facility, training the future workforce in advanced engineering disciplines such as robotics, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, autonomous manufacturing, simulation, and augmented reality.

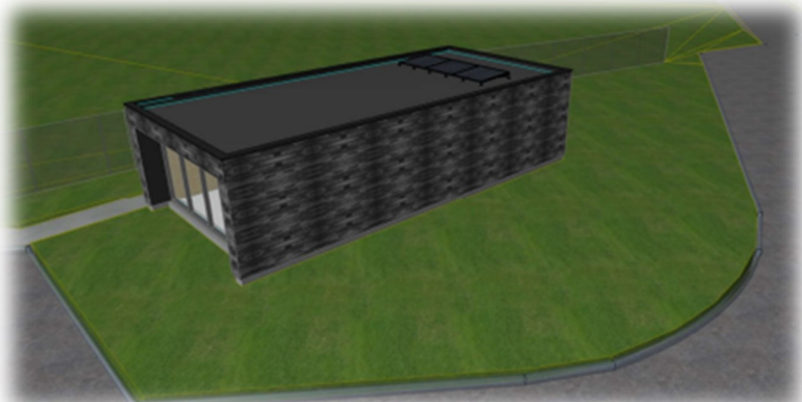
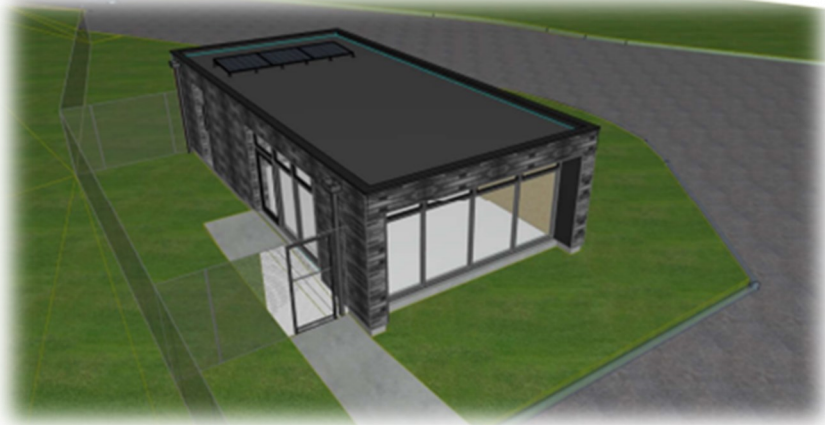
During Quarter 1 of this year the tender process was completed and we are now awaiting LUF funding approval before proceeding to contractor appointment and commencement stage.

High Value Engineering (HiVE) Centre





Case Study - Education Centre at Roseheyworth



The build process for a new **Education centre at Roseheyworth** Household Waste Recycling Centre is progressing well despite lead times having to be extended due to delays for construction materials and build costs higher than expected. It is proposed that the Education Centre is constructed on the site to allow opportunities for **school children and community groups to learn** about the benefits of **recycling**, what happens to **materials**, the benefits of a **circular economy** and encourage people to **take responsibility for their waste** through interactive materials, games and touch screen technology. Completion is expected in Quarter 3.

Capital cost is yet to be finalised but expected to be **in the region of £280,000** which has been funded by the Welsh Government Circular Economy Fund.



Case Study - Litter and Fly-tipping Strategy



As detailed in our previous report, Blaenau Gwent is only the

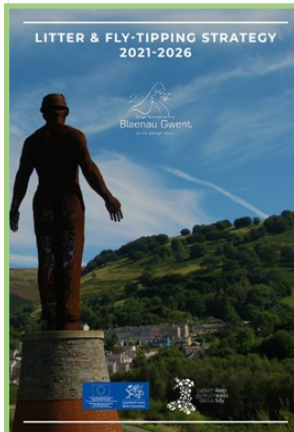
2nd council in Wales to develop its own litter and fly-tipping strategy.

The Strategy aligns with the councils key priority areas i.e. *Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient*

Following the Council's adoption of the strategy in June 2021 we have moved forward using the Strategy's outcome goals as reference, we have worked with our funding partners at Keep Wales Tidy to support the Caru Cymru (Love Wales) campaign which has seen our funded LEQ Officer develop and roll out a programme across Blaenau Gwent schools to Educate students on the impact of Litter on the environment and begin the challenge to "Change Behaviour" as a proactive measure in the fight against Litter. Included in this programme is the encouragement to recycle with the Officer taking them on a journey through the whole recycling process.

In addition to the educational element the officer has been building links and relationships with our amazing army of volunteers and community groups to not only support them in their efforts but to ensure the work they undertake is appreciated and valued.

Again as part of the strategy outcomes the Officer has commenced working with other Stakeholders and sectors to encourage all with a vested Interest or who are impacted or affected by Litter to be involved in the campaign. Already we have seen local and national businesses become involved including; making a commitment to contribute to a community litter pick and the provision of specialist bins at a known litter hotspot to encourage bins to be used.



Six Bells Litter Pick



Engagement & Litter Pick
Cwmcrachen



Cwmtillery Litter Pick



New trial bins going into
selected schools



Case Study - Planning approved for glass manufacturing facility in Ebbw Vale

Planning permission was granted in June 2022 for a glass bottle manufacturing facility in Ebbw Vale, which aims to bring around 600 jobs to the local area when it opens.

CiNER Glass Property Ltd, which already operates a facility in Turkey, was formally granted permission for the construction and operation of a purpose-built glass manufacturing facility, and associated development at Rassau Industrial Estate. The first part of the facility, which will be called 'Dragon Glass', is expected to be operational late in 2024. The application was granted subject to a number of detailed planning conditions imposed by Blaenau Gwent Council's Planning Committee.

Councillor John Morgan, Blaenau Gwent Council's Cabinet Member for Place & Regeneration says:

"This is really great news for Blaenau Gwent. The CiNER glass manufacturing facility is a major investment which will bring much needed jobs to Blaenau Gwent and the region, both during the construction phase and when fully up and running. It will also have benefits for local supply chains, and is a welcome and a major boost to the local economy as we recover from the damaging impact of the Covid pandemic.

"CiNER's business strategy is to be the world's largest glass producer using the latest and best technology; and to do so with a model that is environmentally friendly, sustainable, and values people. This will create significant employment opportunities within an economically challenged region as we work to tackle economic deprivation and create further economic opportunities for our communities.

"CiNER is committed to engaging with a range of local partners including colleges, the local authority and job centre plus/Careers Wales to develop opportunities around apprenticeships and work placements including during construction."

Head of Planning Steve Smith said planning was recommended to go ahead with a number of conditions which were designed to make the development acceptable; mitigate any impact on residents and the local area and exercise future control over the site. Air quality & pollution; visual impact; noise; highways issues and ecology and environmental issues were all addressed as part of the detailed report presented to members of the Planning Committee.

The
Environmental
Assessment
as part of the
Ciner Glass
Manufacturing Plant
Planning
Application has
been
completed



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