

T: 01495 355001

E: committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk



Blaenau Gwent

Our Ref./Ein Cyf.
Your Ref./Eich Cyf.
Contact:/Cysylltwch â: deb.jones@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

25th August 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

CABINET

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams - if you would like to attend this meeting live via Microsoft Teams please contact committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk on Monday, 4th September, 2023 at 11.30 am.

Yours faithfully

Damien McCann
Interim Chief Executive

AGENDA

Pages

1. SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION

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

2. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

Mae'r Cynghor 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. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

To receive any declarations of interest or dispensations.

DECISION SHEET

4. **CABINET**

3 - 8

To receive the decisions of Cabinet held on 19th July, 2023.

PEOPLE AND EDUCATION PORTFOLIO

5. **STATUTORY NOTICE OBJECTIONS REPORT - ALN RESOURCES BASE CAPACITY**

9 - 32

To consider report of the Interim Corporate Director of Education.

To: Councillor S. Thomas
Councillor H. Cunningham
Councillor J. C. Morgan
Councillor 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 – 19th JULY, 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 and Regeneration
Councillor J.C. Morgan**

**Cabinet Member – People & Social Services
Councillor H. Trollope**

**Cabinet Member – People & Education
Councillor S. Edmunds**

WITH: Interim Chief Executive
Chief Officer Resources
Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
Interim Corporate Director Education
Chief Officer Customer and Commercial
Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance
Head of Adult Services
Partnerships Team Leader
Policy Officer
Press Officer

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.
No. 2	<u>APOLOGIES</u> The following apologies for absence were received:- Interim Corporate Director Social Services Head of Democratic Services, Partnerships & Governance
No. 3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u> No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.
	<u>DECISIONS</u>
No. 4	<u>CABINET</u> Consideration was given to the decisions of the Cabinet Meeting held on 7 th June, 2023. RESOLVED that the decisions be received as a true record of proceedings.
No. 5	<u>SPECIAL CABINET</u> Consideration was given to the decisions of the Cabinet Meeting held on 21 st June, 2023. RESOLVED that the decisions be received as a true record of proceedings.

	<p><u>CORPORATE AND PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO</u></p>
No. 6	<p><u>PROPOSED CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Scrutiny and Democratic Officer.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Forward Work Programme for Cabinet for 2023/24 be agreed.</p>
No. 7	<p><u>GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>
No. 8	<p><u>WELSH LANGUAGE ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23 /</u> <u>ADRODDIAD BLYNYDDOL YR IAITH GYMRAEG 2022/23</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Democratic Services, Governance and Partnerships.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Welsh Language Annual Report 2022/23, as published on 30th June 2023 be noted (Option 1).</p>
No. 9	<p><u>REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2022/2023 –</u> <u>PROVISIONAL OUTTURN</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted, the appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report was provided and Cabinet noted the net use of specific reserves (Option 1).</p>

No. 10	<u>CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING, PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2022/2023 FINANCIAL YEAR (AS AT 31 MARCH 2023)</u>
	Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.
	RESOLVED that the report be accepted and
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the appropriate challenge was provided to the financial outcomes in the report; (b) continued to support the appropriate financial control procedures agreed by Council; and (c) noted the budgetary control and monitoring procedures in place within the Capital Team, to safeguard Authority funding (Option 1).
No. 11	<u>MEETING SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE EQUALITY ACT 2010: STRATEGIC EQUALITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT</u>
	Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Democratic Services, Governance and Partnerships.
	RESOLVED that the report be accepted and supported the proposed approach for developing the Strategic Equality Plan 2024/28 and Equality Objectives to be approved by Cabinet (Option 1).
No. 12	<u>CHARTER OF COMMON AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCILS AND BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL</u>
	Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager – Policy and Partnerships.
	RESOLVED that the report be accepted and a return to the existing Charter of Common Agreement arrangements be approved with the four TCCs, with a revised Charter for 2023/24 onwards to be presented for agreement at a future meeting (Option 1).

No. 13	<p><u>COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS ON LONG-TERM EMPTY AND SECOND HOMES</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Deputy Leader noted the consultation questions outlined in Appendix 2 and proposed that the word ‘feel’ in question 2 be amended to read ‘views’ as the consultation was seeking people’s views. The Deputy Leader also proposed an extra open question which would allow people to include any further comments they feel are relevant when responding to the consultation.</p> <p>The Deputy Leader also suggested it would be useful when considering the consultation responses that we are aware of what capacity people are responding to the consultation. It was felt that a response from a housing or homelessness charity would be quite different from a landlord and potentially an RSL.</p> <p>The proposals were supported and seconded by Cabinet Members.</p> <p>RESOLVED accordingly.</p> <p>FURTHER RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the details of the discretionary powers that Councils have relating to council tax premiums be noted, and it was agreed that a public consultation exercise be undertaken on proposals to introduce a council tax premium for long term empty properties and second homes within Blaenau Gwent. The proposed consultation questions are in Appendix 2 (Option 1).</p>
No. 14	<p><u>PEOPLE AND EDUCATION PORTFOLIO</u></p> <p><u>SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE INFORMATION (INCLUDING SOCIAL SERVICES 1ST JANUARY TO 31ST MARCH AND EDUCATION SPRING TERM – 2023 AND CORPORATE SERVICES)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the joint report of the Interim Corporate Director Social Services and Interim Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report and approach be accepted and the revised Safeguarding in Education Policy as shown in Appendix 3 be agreed (Option 1).</p>

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 5

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 29.08.2023

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 29.08.2023

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **04.09.23**

Report Subject: **ALN Resource Base Capacity – Proposed Implementation of Additional Resource Bases**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member for Education**

Report Submitted by: **Joanne Watts, Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	24.9.23					04.09.23		

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is:

- a) To provide the outcome of the Statutory Notice on which concluded on 26th July, 2013.
- b) To seek approval for the implementation of proposals to increase the capacity of ALN Resource Bases through a phased approach as follows:

1.2 Phase 1 (based on immediate demand)

- To recognise the transition group established in Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community - Secondary Phase as a 6-place extension to the current Learning Resource Base from September 2023
- To create a 6-8 place Resource Base at Tredegar Comprehensive School from September 2023
- To create a 10 place Resource Base at Sofrydd Primary School from September 2024/25
- To create a 15 place Resource Base at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg from September 2024

In addition, to provide increased wellbeing support from September 2023 to support learners who are presented to the Vulnerable Learner Panel (VLP).

Phase 2 (subject to further business case)

The development of a medium-term plan to secure additional capacity to facilitate sustained growth and development. It should be noted some/all of these will only be implemented if required following a review of the impact of Phase 1. This proposal suggests provision at the below schools between 2025 and 2029:

- To create a Resource Base at Brynmawr Foundation School for 10 pupils
- To create a Resource Base at Cwm Primary School for 10 pupils
- To create a Resource base at a Faith Based Primary school (such as Roman Catholic/Church in Wales Schools) in Blaenau Gwent (yet to be determined) for 10 pupils
- To create a Resource Base at Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community - Roseheyworth Road Primary Campus for 10 pupils

A determination is sought from Cabinet to proceed to implementation, in line with the outcome of the Statutory Notice.

2. **Scope and Background**

2.1 The Welsh Government School Organisation Code (2018), dictates that proposals **must** be published for the following elements of school reorganisation:

1. the opening of a maintained school (including a special school);
2. the closing of a maintained school (including a special school);
3. to make a regulated alteration to a maintained school; and,
4. to change the category of a maintained school.

Therefore, the proposal to increase the capacity for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Resource Bases across the County Borough **must** be subject to a formal consultation.

2.2 On Wednesday 19th April 2023, the Cabinet agreed to endorse a formal consultation on proposals to increase the capacity for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Resource Bases in both Primary and Secondary settings.

2.3 Formal consultation commenced on Monday 24th April 2023. The process then concluded on Tuesday 6th June 2023 at 5:00pm. Consultees were asked to provide their views, opinions and feedback via one or more of the following methods:

- attending a drop-in session.
- completion of an on-line survey; and/or,
- in writing via the 21st Century School's email address.

2.4 In accordance with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code, the Authority is required to publish a consultation report which:

- summarises the issues raised by consultees;
- responds to these by means of clarification, amendment to the proposal or rejection of the concerns, with supporting reasons; and
- sets out Estyn's response to the consultation.

This report was presented at a Special Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday 21st June 2023 and Cabinet agreed to proceed to the next stage, to publish a Statutory Notice (**Appendix 1**).

2.5 This report presents the summary of the issues arising from the publication of the Statutory Notice and proposes the next steps in relation to increasing

the capacity for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Resource Bases. As part of the Statutory notice, the public were given a period of 28 days to object to the proposals. The Statutory Notice period concluded on the 26th July 2023 and there were no objections to the proposals.

2.6 A full business case has been prepared in relation to the implementation of the proposal and is attached as **Appendix 2**.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 Option 1 - It is recommended that:

- Cabinet recommend that Council considers and accepts this Objections report, with evidence from the Statutory Notice (**Appendix 1**) and grants approval to proceed to the implementation stage;
- The full business case (**Appendix 2**) be accepted in relation to the implementation of the resources bases from September 2023 onwards.

Option 2 – Cabinet does not accept the Objections report and business case in relation to implementation of the resourced bases from September 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 School Organisation Code (2018), there is a statutory requirement for Councils to consult upon and publish school reorganisation proposals. Education is a strategic priority within the Corporate Plan. In order to enable people to 'Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent'. In addition, the proposal would support the Education Directorate's purpose to deliver:

'Better Schools, Better Citizens and Better Communities'

The Local Authority also has a statutory responsibility to ensure that it meets the needs of all learners, including ALN learners in line with the requirements of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018. This proposal would support the Education Directorate to fulfil this statutory responsibility.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

5.1.1 Capital

There are capital financial implications associated with Phase 1 of this proposal for the Council of approximately £400,000. This will be met via contributions from the Welsh Government ALN Grant funding and Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme over a 2-year period.

5.1.2

Revenue

Blaenau Gwent currently has 11 ALN pupils that are educated outside the Local Authority at a cost of £600,000 per year (22/23 price base), the budget for 2023/24 is £720,000. If Blaenau Gwent was able to increase capacity in resource base provisions, there would be opportunities to consider making education provision for some of the 11 pupils back in Blaenau Gwent.

5.1.3

Revenue implications associated with Phase 1 of the project have been modelled as part of the business case (**Appendix 2**) - If pupils are unable to be placed locally in a resource base, then they would need to be placed in Out County placements which could see these annual costs incrementally increase in line with the projected demand by approximately £1.288 million by the 2025/26 financial year:

Impact each financial year			
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Rising Costs of Out County Placements if do nothing	£273,624	416,280	598,253

It is anticipated the proposal will begin to impact on the requirement for Out of County placements from the 2024/25 financial year, therefore reducing this expenditure and allowing funding to be vired accordingly.

In the short term the proposal will likely result in a shortfall when compared to the current budgets, however the proposal is predicted to avoid significant cost increases in terms of Out of County placements. It is proposed these additional costs be funded from award of a cost pressure for 2 financial years as follows:

2024/25- £178,611
 2025/26 - £113,000

Costs associated with home to school transport for out county placements are increasing for ALN pupils, the costs are forecast to be £158,569 for the 2023/24 financial year. These costs are regularly reviewed and subject to change in line with pupil placement. Should the proposal be implemented the Council would also see an incremental reduction in the transport costs associated with Out of County placements every year. These savings would be used to mitigate any transport costs to transport pupils to the new ALN resource bases which would prevent any long-term additional cost pressure associated with transport. However, there may be a short-term transport cost pressure if none of the 11 pupils currently in Out of County placements change to a Blaenau Gwent placement.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

If this proposal is not taken forward, the Local Authority will be unable to meet

the needs of many learners particularly those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Additional Learning Needs (ALN) within Blaenau Gwent. Therefore, they would need to be placed Out of County. The costs of Out of County specialist provision will increase significantly year-on-year, and learners are likely to be traveling longer distances to receive specialist education extending their school day, care etc. and placing further pressures on the Home-to-School Transport budget. The cost associated with Out of County placements and home to school transport represents a significant risk to the Council. However, there are also risks associated with implementing the resource bases, in particular costs of necessary building/adaption rates which may increase if inflation continues to be high or rises further.

5.3 **Legal**

Legal advice has been sought in relation to the Statutory Notice. In accordance with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code (2018), there is a statutory requirement for the Council to undertake formal consultation with all interested and affected parties.

5.4 **Human Resources**

The proposed increase in pupil numbers will require the Governing Body of all affected schools to plan for the workforce requirements in readiness for the respective expansions. Organisational Development will provide advice, support and guidance to the Governing Bodies for the workforce planning and consequential recruitment processes.

5.5 **Health & Safety**

The Corporate Health and Safety Team have initially been consulted with regards to the impact associated with any physical works planned within education settings and will be further consulted as the projects are progressed.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

6.1.1 The Statutory Notice was published for the statutory 28-day period plus the 1 day of publication from 26th June 2023 until 26th July 2023. This timeframe is known as the objection period. During the objection period the Council did not receive any objections to the proposal.

6.1.2 Please refer to the full business case (**Appendix 2**) relating to the implementation of the proposal

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public.**

The public can expect a fair and equitable consultation process, which is fully compliant with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code (2018).

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

Stakeholder engagement is a key focus of all school organisation proposals. The proposal has been subject to consultation in line with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code (2018), which has been used to

inform the decision-making process. In addition, in line with the code, pupils have been consulted with via the school councils of the affected schools.

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

The proposal looks to secure additional provision for both Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and ALN Resource Base (ALNRB) provision in line with local demand for places for the long-term development, and sustainability of the education system in Blaenau Gwent.

6.5 *Preventative focus*

The proposal seeks to address sustainability issues associated with the future growth and development of the ALN reform Act and resource base placements in the County Borough, preventing the need to utilise costly Out County placements.

6.6 *Collaboration / partnership working.*

The consultation along with the development of the proposal has been developed collaboratively with both the Inclusion Team, Headteachers, Finance, and Community Services.

6.7 *Integration (across service areas)*

The proposal seeks to secure integration for new and existing pupils in ALN placements supporting growth and sustainability of provision for the future needs of learners.

6.8 *Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions*

By having provision locally, it will address the climate change agenda reducing carbon emissions for learners travelling excessively for their educational needs. Any physical works planned and undertaken within education settings will take account of decarbonisation and reducing carbon emissions and are firmly aligned to the work of the Council.

6.9 *Integrated Impact Assessment*

A full impact assessment has been prepared and published as part of the consultation exercise.

7. *Monitoring Arrangements*

7.1 There has been extensive monitoring in line with the consultation processes, responses and outcomes which have been answered, analysed and taken via the Council's political processes.

Background Documents / Electronic Links
Appendix 1 Statutory Notice



STATUTORY NOTICE
FV 21.6.23 signed.pdf

Appendix 2 Full Business Case



ALN Resource Base
Business Case.docx

This page is intentionally left blank

STATUTORY NOTICE

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Education Directorate, Floor 8 Anvil Court, Abertillery, Blaenau Gwent, NP13 1DB.

Notice is given in accordance with section 42 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code (011/2018) that Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (“the Council”), having consulted such persons as required, proposes to establish and change provision which is recognised by the Council as reserved for children with additional learning needs in the Primary and Secondary Schools listed below.

The proposals will be implemented in two phases and will result in an increase in the capacity for Additional Learning Needs (“ALN”) and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (“ASD”) Resource Bases across the County Borough in the schools involved. The proposal is to increase ASD and ALN places from 61 to 86 across the Primary Schools and increase the provision at Secondary Schools from 62 to 80 places in Phase 1 (including 15 Welsh-medium places). The proposals also include the potential to increase places by a further 40 places in Phase 2 (including a Faith Based provision). This will take effect from September 2023 on a phased basis over the next 5 years.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council will be the admission authority via the Council’s ALN panel. The new ALN Resource Bases will be for pupils of statutory school age (3-16).

Phase 1

School	Alteration	Planned Date of Implementation
Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community - Secondary Campus	The establishment of 6 places reserved for children with additional learning needs as an ASD/ALN Resource Base	September 2023
Tredegar Comprehensive School	The establishment of 6 to 8 places reserved for children with additional learning needs as ASD Resource Base	September 2023
Sofrydd Primary School	The establishment of 10 places reserved for children with additional learning needs as an ASD/ALN Resource Base	September 2024 or September 2025
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg	The establishment of 10 places reserved for children with additional learning needs as an ASD/ALN Resource Base	September 2024

Phase 2

School	Alteration	Planned Date of Implementation
Brynmawr Foundation School	The establishment of 10 places reserved for children with additional learning needs as an ASD/ALN Resource Base	2025 - 2029
Cwm Primary School	The establishment of 10 places reserved for children with additional learning needs as an ASD/ALN Resource Base	2025 - 2029
Faith Based Primary School in Blaenau Gwent (to be determined)	The establishment, if required, of 10 places reserved for children with additional learning needs as an ASD/ALN Resource Base	2025 - 2029
Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community (Roseheyworth Road Primary Campus)	The establishment of 10 places reserved for children with additional learning needs as an ASD/ALN Resource Base	2025 - 2029

The names, addresses and details of the maintaining local authority for each of the schools the subject of these proposals is as follows:

School	Address	Maintaining Authority
Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community	Roseheyworth Road Campus, Roseheyworth Road, Abertillery, NP13 1SR	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Cwm Primary School	Canning Street, Cwm, Ebbw Vale, NP23 7RD	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community	Secondary Phase, Lime Avenue, Ebbw Vale, NP23 6GL	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Sofrydd Primary School	Sofrydd Road, Sofrydd, NP11 5DW	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Tredeggar Comprehensive School	Stable Lane, Tredeggar, NP22 4BH	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg	Rising Sun Industrial Estate, Blaina, NP13 3DQ	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Brynmawr Foundation School	Clydach Dingle, Brynmawr, NP23 4XT	Foundation School, maintained by Central Government

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council undertook a period of consultation before deciding to publish this proposal. A consultation report containing a summary of the issues raised by consultees, the proposer's responses and Estyn's full response is available on:-

Outturn report: <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/media/gv2jbza2/aln-consultation-outturn-report-for-cabinet-21-6-23.docx>

Estyns Response: [1-estyn-eng.pdf \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](#)

Pupils will be provided with transport in accordance with the Council's Home to School transport policy. The Council has established a process in order to assess the travel needs of children who may require ALN transport. Pupils requiring ALN transport who live:

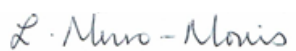
- over 1.5 miles (for those under 8 years of age); and/or,
- over 2 miles (for those aged between 8-16 years of age)

from their nearest suitable ALN provision, will automatically qualify for free home to school transport. *Please note that in instances where the school is a parental choice and not the provision determined by the ALN Panel, no transport will be provided.

Within a period of 28 days of the date on which the proposal was published, **that is to say by 26th July 2023** any person may object to the proposals.

- Objections by e-mail should be sent to 21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk.
- Objections in writing should be sent to Joanne Watts, Service Manager for Education Transformation and Business change, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Floor 8 Anvil Court, Abertillery, Blaenau Gwent, NP13 1DB.

Signed



**Interim Corporate Director of Education
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.
26th June 2023**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Should this proposal proceed, it will improve the suitability of the learning environment for pupils with ALN. It will also provide access to local provision in mainstream settings for ALN pupils. This will help with individual needs of pupils such as health, safety and welfare issues identified in the application for places in Resource Bases. Places will be available locally for pupils living in Blaenau Gwent; improving learner outcomes and inclusion on a County Borough level. Also the proposal can offer places in Blaenau Gwent for pupils from other Local Authorities, should the need arise and if space is available.

There is a need for ASD/ALN provision in our mainstream schools to support this proposal. Currently provision is full in our ALN resource bases and there will be no growth to support our learners if this proposal does not proceed. Blaenau Gwent already has cross border regional working arrangements in place for places in ALN provision.

The consultation period for this proposal commenced on **Monday 24th April 2023** and concluded on **Tuesday 6th June 2023**.

Therefore, this proposal will be delivered in 2 phases:

Phase 1

- To recognise the transition group established in Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community- Secondary Phase as a 6 place RB from September 2023
- To create a 6-8 place ASD Resource Base at Tredegar Comprehensive School from September 2023
- To create a 10 place ASD/ALN Resource Base at Sofrydd Primary School from September 2024/25
- To create a 15 place ASD/ALN Resource Base at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg from September 2024

Phase 2

- The development of a Medium-term plan to secure additional capacity to facilitate sustained growth and development in Primary and Secondary Schools. This will include provision at the below schools between 2025 and 2029:
- To create an ASD/ALN Resource Base at Brynmawr Foundation School for 10 pupils
- To create an ASD/ALN Resource Base at Cwm Primary School for 10 pupils
- To create, if required, an ASD/ALN Resource base at a Faith Based Primary school (such as Roman Catholic/Church in Wales Schools) in Blaenau Gwent (yet to be determined) for 10 pupils
- To create an ASD/ALN Resource Base at Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community - Roseheyworth Road Primary Campus for 10 pupils

The consultation report is available on Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's website.

Further information on this proposal can be found here:

[aln-resource-base-consultation-document-fv-17-4-23.pdf \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](#)

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.

END OF NOTICE

This page is intentionally left blank



ALN Resource Base Capacity Review

Business case

SRO:	Dr Luisa Munro-Morris
Project Manager:	Joanne Watts
Organisation:	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council – Education Directorate – Inclusion Team

	Name	Signature	Date
Prepared by:			
Reviewed by:			
Approved by:			

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this business case is to ask Cabinet to recommend to Council the proposal to increase the capacity for Resource Bases across the County Borough in both Primary and Secondary settings for Additional Learning Needs pupils, accommodating the demand for places in both Primary and Secondary settings.

1.2 In addition, the business case is seeking approval to commission Brynmawr Foundation School to provide wellbeing support, which will be accessible to learners across Blaenau Gwent that are presented at the Vulnerable Learner Panel. This support consists of a full time Teaching Assistant and a part time administrator who will co-ordinate the support timetable. The wellbeing support will be part funded by the Whole School Approach to Wellbeing element of funding from the LEAG. The estimated cost for this support is: £48,667 and the LEAG can fund £22,305, which leaves a total of £26,362 to fund for the 2023/24 financial year.

1.3 *The business case is seeking revenue funding to support this of:*

2024/25 - £178,611 and a further £113,000 in 2025/26 as the implementation of the Resource Bases covers academic years.

2. THE CASE FOR CHANGE

2.1 Scope & Background

There are currently 7 Resource Bases across Blaenau Gwent accommodating 61 learners in Primary settings and 62 at Secondary settings. There is an increasing need for Resource Base placements in mainstream settings for children and young people within the Borough both at Primary (aged 3-11) and Secondary settings (aged 11-16).

All current resource bases in the County Borough are full to capacity. The recent Estyn inspection highlighted 'In the planning of provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), data is not always used effectively enough to inform long-term planning'. The Education Transformation and Inclusion teams have therefore undertaken a review of the current provision and have used this data to project the demand going forward, under this proposal Education are seeking to set up new bases in line with the projected demand (**Appendix 1**), with the aim of also reducing Out of County placements in the medium term and having a more localised strategy for learners.

The Council is committed to providing all children and young people with high quality education and training tailored to meet their needs, which will develop their potential, extend aspirations, promote social inclusion and contribute to the economic regeneration of the area. Resource Bases are essential for pupils with identified ALN requirements to enable them to fulfil their potential.

Both Welsh Government and the Authority's Welsh in Education Forum (WEF) partnership have identified that there is no ALN provision for Welsh medium education across the Borough, this can result in learners having to transfer into English medium settings when an additional learning need is identified, therefore highlighting the need for a Welsh medium resource base to be established.

In light of the new ALN reform and the need to establish a Vulnerable Learner Panel to align with the new legislation, the Local Authority must offer provision for those learners being brought to panel. Learners at panel require something additional in terms of wellbeing support, in order to prevent disengagement and exclusions, or to support integration back into school where they have been absent for a period of time.

2.2 The Proposal

Education has recently undertaken a formal consultation exercise to extend the capacity of resource bases in line with the following proposal:

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council propose to increase the capacity for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Resource Bases across the County Borough in both Primary and Secondary settings. The Council will work with the schools to develop a long-term plan to support sustained growth and development. Therefore, this proposal will be delivered in 2 phases:

Phase 1 (based on immediate demand) - To increase resource base capacity within schools as follows:

- To recognise the transition group established in Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community-Secondary Phase as a 6-place extension to the current LRB from September 2023
- To create a 6-8 place ASD Resource Base at Tredegar Comprehensive School from September 2023
- To create a 15 place ASD/ALN Resource Base at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg from April 2024
- To create a 10 place ASD/ALN Resource Base at Sofrydd Primary School from September 2024

The Council will also remodel learning environments to create additional classroom space and associated facilities to accommodate the proposal and will also develop nurture provisions in schools in order to create a more inclusive environment and to support the majority of learners with additional learning needs in a mainstream setting to prevent the requirement of additional learning need support.

The local authority Education Directorate (Inclusion Team) are also proposing to commission wellbeing support operating from Brynmawr Foundation School. This will enable engagement of learners and ensure the local authority's ability to ensure that a full-time education (statutory requirement) is offered, in place, and maintained. This provision will consist of a full time TA (Teaching Assistant)

with a part time administrator to co-ordinate the support timetable for all learners in receipt via the Vulnerable Learner Panel. The support offered can be flexible and delivered at appropriate venues and will depend on the current education situation. As an example the learner may still be accessing school but is at risk of disengaging/becoming excluded; support would likely be offered to take place at the current school setting. Another example may be that the learner is already disengaged or excluded and requires support for reintegration; support may then be offered in a local setting i.e. library.

Phase 2 of the proposal – This has been included as part of the consultation exercise. However, it should be noted some/all of these will only be implemented if required following a review of the impact of Phase 1.

The development of a Medium-term plan to secure additional capacity to facilitate sustained growth and development in Primary and Secondary settings. This will include provision at the following schools between 2025 and 2029:

- To create an ASD/ALN Resource Base at Brynmawr Foundation School for up to 10 pupils
- To create an ASD/ALN Resource Base at Cwm Primary School for up to 10 pupils
- To create an ASD/ALN Resource base at a faith based primary school in Blaenau Gwent (yet to be determined) for up to 10 pupils.
- To create an ASD/ALN Resource Base at Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community - Roseheyworth Road Primary Campus for up to 10 pupils

2.3 A review of Phase 1 will be undertaken in September 2025. As a result, this business case considers the implications of Phase 1 only and a further business case will be prepared (if required) for phase 2 during the Autumn term 2025 following a detailed impact assessment of Phase 1.

2.4 **Alignment with Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities etc**

Education is a strategic priority within the Corporate Plan. In order to enable people to 'Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent'.

The proposal would support the Education Directorate's purpose to deliver:

'Better Schools, Better Citizens and Better Communities'

2.5 **Collaboration Partnership working**

The consultation along with the development of the business case has been developed collaboratively with both the Inclusion Team, Headteachers, Finance, Health & Safety colleagues and Community Services. Following implementation there will be further collaborative work with the schools that have the additional resource bases to support other schools across the local authority.

2.6 Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions

By having provision locally, it will address the climate change agenda reducing carbon emissions for learners travelling excessively for their educational needs. Any physical works planned and undertaken within education settings will take account of decarbonisation and reducing carbon emissions and are firmly aligned to the work of the Council.

2.7 Expected Benefits and Advantages

- Creation of a local solution which will address the increased demand for ALN provision.
- Continuity and sustainability in terms of local education for learners with specialist and medical needs.
- The structure will build confidence and self-esteem in pupils' parents and staff.
- Pupils will benefit from local provision enabling them to remain within their locality rather than attending provision out of county.
- Reduced costs associated with out of county placements, whilst securing local investment within the Blaenau Gwent school estate.
- Improve access to and facilities for learners who meet the criteria for ALN provision across the county borough.
- Reduced travel time for learners and the carbon footprint.

2.8 Risks

Should nothing change, the Local Authority will be unable to meet the needs of many learners, particularly those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Additional Learning Needs (ALN) within Blaenau Gwent. Therefore, they would need to be placed Out of County. The costs of Out of County specialist provision would increase significantly year-on-year, and learners are likely to be traveling longer distances to receive specialist education extending their school day, care etc. and placing further pressures on the Home-to-School Transport budget which is already pressured and so represents a significant risk to the Council. However, there is also a risk that implementation of the proposals could incur additional costs associated with building work and or resources if for example inflation continues to rise.

3. OPTIONS ANALYSIS

3.1 Options Considered

A detailed option appraisal was undertaken to explore ways in which the requirement for additional ALN provision could be addressed in line with primary and secondary need. The critical success factors below were considered.

3.2 Critical Success Factors:

- Strategic fit & business needs - ensuring the provision meets the vision for education i.e. a localised, accessible and high-quality Education provision
- Achievability - Securing places needed in line with demand.

- Affordability - Financial viability and optimising value for money

3.3 Long list of options

The long list of options detailed within **Table 2**, were evaluated by the project group and a short-list drawn up.

Long List of Options

Options	Description:	Conclusion:
1	Business as usual maintain the status quo - As all resource bases are full this would result in sending pupils who require support to Out of County Resource Bases	Not enough capacity exists, and this would not support the vision for education in securing localised, accessible and high-quality provision. Also, very costly. Discounted
2	Implement Phase 1 of the proposal at this stage only - Build capacity immediately in resources bases in both Primary and Secondary settings, whilst also developing further nurture provisions and wellbeing support	Preferred way forward in, this will address Secondary need and Welsh Medium demand Imminently and plan medium and long-term growth. Possible
3	Implement Phase 1 & Phase 2 of the proposal by increasing capacity in resource bases over a number of Primary and Secondary provision	Preferred way forward in, this will address Secondary need and Welsh Medium demand Imminently and plan medium and long-term growth. Merits further consideration, but financial constraints, would not permit effective and timely implementation. Possible
4	Tackle capacity issues in just secondary school settings	There is currently immediate demand in the secondary sector for places also, as illustrated in the demand analysis. Discounted
5	Tackle capacity issues in just Primary school settings	There is currently immediate demand in the secondary sector for places also, as illustrated in the demand analysis. Discounted

Based on the Critical Success factors, options 1, 4 and 5 have been discounted as they would potentially:

- Not address the immediate and medium-term need
- Result in increased costs to the Council for ALN pupils if they had to be educated out of county.
- Cause disruption within the existing education system
- Negatively affect provision and access to specialist facilities and services

3.4 The short list of options

- **Option 1** Maintain the status quo (business as usual) This is a standard baseline comparator which must be considered - As all resource bases are full this would result in sending pupils who require support to Out of County placements

- **Option 2** Implement Phase 1 of the proposal only by increasing capacity in resource bases in Primary and Secondary provision. Whilst also providing the wellbeing support immediately to learners being presented at the VLP in order to ensure maximum engagement at school and developing further nurture provisions to support pupils in the mainstream environment.
- **Option 3** Implement Phase 1 & Phase 2 of the proposal by increasing capacity in resource bases over several Primary and Secondary settings.

3.5 **The Preferred Option**

Option 1 - A detailed financial analysis was undertaken for Option 1 but it was not considered to be financially viable. In addition, there would unlikely be sufficient capacity in the private sector and this would not support the vision for education in securing localised, accessible and high-quality Education provision.

Option 3 - Was discounted in terms of achievability and meeting the business needs, as this would result in the creation of more places in resource bases than are required in the medium term. As there are plans to develop wellbeing and nurture provisions to create a more inclusive ALN environment in mainstream this could impact on the requirement for the growing the number of places in the medium term

Option 2 - Implement Phase 1 of the proposal at this stage only – Building capacity immediately in resources bases in both Primary and Secondary mainstream settings was therefore considered to be the preferred option. It was considered that it met all the critical success factors in terms of a localised, accessible and high-quality education provision. It would secure places in the short term and potentially impact on the requirements for places going forward. It is the most financially viable option in terms of securing value for money.

- 3.6 As a result, this business case considers the implications of Option 2 only (Phase1). Following a detailed impact assessment of Phase 1, a further business case will be prepared for phase 2 in the Autumn term 2025, should it be required.

4. **PROCUREMENT ROUTE**

- 4.1 All project related procurements will be via competitive tendering in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

4.2 **Procurement Plan**

If successful all projects will be procured where appropriate via a single stage, design and build procurement tender process. Tenders will be assessed on a cost/quality basis, and the Contractor appointed at tender stage as the most economically advantageous tender.

4.3 **Contract**

A suitable form of contract will be adopted. Under the SEWSCAP Framework, both NEC and JCT forms are available for use with the design and build/develop and construct approach.

4.4 Community Benefits

Community benefits will be set out in the tender documents for all projects and will be assessed as part of the quality evaluation process and will follow the Welsh Government Guidelines. The community benefits process will be managed by experienced officers within the Council and will work with the Contractor's community liaison representative to deliver the outcomes. The community benefits registered will be developed with colleagues from the regeneration team at the next stage of the EOI.

5. FUNDING AND AFFORDABILITY

Table 1: Cost and Funding for the recommended option

Lifespan		Year 1 23/24 £	Year 2 24/25 £	Year 3 25/26 £	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Capital Expenditure							
1	Fixed assets	100,000	140,000				240,000
2	Software						
3	Other Capital items	100,000	60,000				160,000
4	Total Capital costs (CAPEX)	200,000	200,000				400,000
Operating Expenditure							
5	Personnel	102,428	458,281	504,915	504,915	504,915	2,075,454
6	Depreciation						
7	Maintenance						
8	Operating licences etc.						
9	Training						
10	Other Operating costs						
11	Total Operating costs (OPEX)	102,428	458,281	504,915	504,915	504,915	2,075,454
Total Expenditure							

12	Total Project Costs (CAPEX + OPEX)	302,428	658,281	504,915	504,915	504,915	2,475,454
Funding							
13	CAPEX funding						
14	OPEX funding						
	Reduction in current	49,176	198,700	194,915	314,760	314,760	1,072,311
	OOO Placements	80,970	80,970	197,000	197,000	197,000	752,940
	Other – CP awarded						
15	Third party funding (CAPEX if any)	200,000	200,000				
16	Other Funding						
17	Total funding	330,146	479,670	391,915	511,760	511,760	1,825,251
Affordability Assessment							
18	Shortfall/Overage CAPEX (CAPEX Costs – Total CAPEX Funding)	0	0				
19	Shortfall/Overage OPEX (OPEX Costs – Total OPEX Funding)	(27,718)	178,611	113,000	(6,845)	(6,845)	250,203

5.1 Capital Funding

There are capital financial implications associated with Phase 1 of this proposal for the Council of approximately £400,000. This will be met via contributions from the Welsh Government ALN Grant funding and Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme over a 2-year period.

5.2 Revenue Funding

Blaenau Gwent currently has 11 ALN pupils that are educated outside the Local Authority at a cost of £600,000 per year (22/23 price base), the budget for 2023/24 is £720,000. Increasing capacity within Blaenau Gwent resource base provisions would result in opportunities to consider making education provision for some of the 11 pupils back in Blaenau Gwent reducing costs.

Revenue implications associated with Phase 1 of the project have been modelled (Appendix 2) - If pupils are unable to be placed locally in a resource base, then they would need to be placed in Out County placements which could see these annual costs incrementally increase in line with the projected demand by approximately £3.3m over the next 5 years

It is anticipated the proposal will begin to impact on the requirement for Out County placements from the 2024/25 financial year, therefore reducing this expenditure and allowing funding to be vired accordingly.

Costs associated with home to school transport for out county placements are increasing for ALN pupils, the costs are forecast to be £158,569 for the 2023/24 financial year. These costs are regularly reviewed and subject to change in line with pupil placement. Should the proposal be implemented the Council should also see an incremental reduction in the transport costs associated with Out County placements every year as learners naturally leave education, however as this funding is released it will be assumed that this will be used to mitigate any cost pressures that may arise in transporting learners to the new Resource Bases.

Under option 2 In the short term there will likely be a shortfall in years 2 and 3 when compared to the current budgets however the proposal is predicted to avoid significant cost increases in terms of Out of County placements. It is proposed these additional costs be funded from an award of a cost pressure for 2 financial years as follows:

2024/25 £178,611

2025/26 £113,000

6. DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

- 6.1 The projects will be managed in accordance with Blaenau Gwent Corporate Project Management Framework, which is based upon PRINCE 2 methodology. Risk, issues, dependencies and benefits registers will be compiled in line with project delivery and are monitored on a monthly basis and/or in line with key developments.
- 6.2 The Project Team (inclusive of Education, schools, community Services directorate and finance) will be led by the Service Manager - Education Transformation and Business Change and will report into the Education Transformation Programme Board on a quarterly basis or more frequently if required and form part of the programme board overall risk register. Along with detailed project risk registers on project level being reviewed and monitored on a monthly basis, including risk escalation and de-escalation agreed at Project Group Meetings.
- 6.3 All risks will be considered in line with any lessons learned, issues, dependencies and assumptions logs. Project development and implementation is operationally managed via the Education Transformation Team Leader in respect of client, finance and education matters and the Architectural Project Manager from a technical, and construction perspective.
- 6.4 Although the Education Transformation Team have gained extensive knowledge over the years of Planning and delivering post occupancy evaluations in line with grant funding requirements, and have developed series

of questions, systems and analysis tools such as snap surveys to capture all comments. The Closure report system for Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme and small projects delivered under the Educational Transformation change agenda requires feedback after year 1, 2 and year 5. This means that project benefits may not be realised fully until the end of year 2 or 3 of the finalised project.

- 6.5 Post occupancy evaluation sessions will be planned with all relevant parties, (Schools, pupils, staff and Community etc) along with a dedicated lessons learned session. These will be used to inform closure reporting, benefits realisation and support the Programme lessons learned register.
- 6.6 Contingency planning is built into each project timeline, financial profile and programme – all of which are monitored on a monthly basis by the Project team.

Appendices.

Appendix 1 – Demand Analysis



Demand Analysis.pdf

Appendix 2 - Financial appraisal table



Financial_Annex1_all_
Business-Justification-

This page is intentionally left blank