

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

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

SUBJECT: PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 13th DECEMBER, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors M. Cook
P. Baldwin
G. Davies
J. Hill
J. Holt
G. Paulsen
J. Millard
M. Moore
J.C. Morgan
J.P. Morgan
S. Thomas
H. Trollope

WITH: Service Manager, Policy and Partnerships
Service Manager, Children Services
Policy Officer (PSB)
Scrutiny and Democratic Officer/Adviser

AND: K. Cross, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
C. Nottingham, Sustainable Food Co-ordinator, Tai Calon

ITEM

SUBJECT

CONDOLENCES

The Chair informed Members of the sad passing of Helen Wilkshire, the wife of Councillor David Wilshire and asked that the Committee hold a one-minutes silence as a mark of respect.

<p>No. 1</p>	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was reported that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>
<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>An apology for absence was received from Councillor M. Cross.</p>
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declarations of interest was raised:-</p> <p><u>Item No. 7 - Blaenau Gwent Participatory Budget Programme:</u> <u>“Community Voice, Community Choice”</u></p> <p>Councillor P. Baldwin Councillor J. Holt Councillor G. Davies Councillor J.P. Morgan</p> <p>Councillor M. Moore wished to report that she was an employee of GAVO who featured in a number of the reports being considered.</p>
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Minutes of the Meeting held on 28th July, 2021.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>BLAENAU GWENT PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2020/21</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Policy and Partnerships.</p> <p>The Service Manager, Policy and Partnerships presented the third annual progress report on ‘The Blaenau Gwent We Want’ Well-being Plan. The Service Manager spoke to the report and outlined the key points as detailed in the report.</p>

The Service Manager referred Members to the Annual Progress Report which provided the progress made in the second year of the PSBs Programme for delivery against the Well-Being Plan under the five key sections. The Service Manager thereupon gave an overview of the five key sections as outlined in the report.

At this juncture, the Service Manager invited questions from Members and noted that questions would be passed to the local board or Regional PBS accordingly if Members requested.

A Member welcomed the report along with the work achieved and proposed that Option 1 be agreed. This proposal was seconded.

The Committee AGREED that the PSB Scrutiny Committee noted the progress made in the third year of delivery against the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan and provided comments (Option 1).

No. 6

WELSH GOVERNMENT EARLY YEARS INTEGRATION TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME PILOT CHILDCARE OFFER – JOINT WORKING PILOT – BLAENAU GWENT PATHFINDER

Consideration was given to the joint from of the Interim Director of Finance and Procurement (Aneurin Bevan University Health Board) and the Service Manager, Blaenau Gwent Children’s Services.

The Service Manager Children’s Services advised that the report updated the PSB Scrutiny Committee on the progress made to date on the Welsh Government’s new Early Years Integration Transformation Pilot in the Blaenau Gwent Pathfinder area. The Service Manager added that the report also sought approval to further roll out into the Blaina Ward from January 2022.

The Service Manager further reminded Members of the work being undertaken as part of the Early Years Integration Transformation Pilot. The Service Manager noted that plans were currently underway to move into Brynmawr then into Nantyglo by January 2022 as already approved by BG PSB. The Service Manager reported that due to the ABUHB Health Visiting Department being recently restructured and Health Visitors given new caseloads, the Brynmawr, Nantyglo and Blaina Wards were being run as a team and therefore approval had been sought from the BG Local Well-being Partnership’s to roll into Blaina at the same time as Nantyglo in January 2022.

It was added that work had also been undertaken around progressing the pilot for another 5 years and the Service Manager was confident that if funding was available the pilot could be rolled across Blaenau Gwent within 2½ years. Although the Service Manager stated that the speed of roll out would be dependent on funding available.

A Member welcomed the extension of the funding and had hoped that the whole of Blaenau Gwent would benefit from this excellent project.

Concerns were raised in respect of the lack of supporting evidence from the work undertaken in the Cwm Ward. The Service Manager Children's Services advised that a full evaluation of the Cwm Ward had not been completed at the time of the writing the report, however, it was hoped that following further roll out in Brynmawr, Nantyglo and Blaina a full analysis of would be included in the next stage when we sought approval for roll out across Blaenau Gwent.

Another Member noted the excellent work achieved with this project and welcomed roll out across Blaenau Gwent as it would be greatly welcomed in the Waundeg Ward. The Service Manager advised that once the project had a presence in a vulnerable area it helped turn that area around. The Service Manager was also pleased that the Waundeg Ward would be one of areas to be accessed in the roll out pilot and it was hoped that we could target this most vulnerable area next year.

The Member further reiterated his thanks to the Service Manager and her Team on the excellent work achieved.

Another Member raised concerns that a study of the progress of children in flying start areas had not been undertaken as they progress through their school life. The Service Manager advised that Welsh Government was not looking at this aspect at the moment and noted the performance indicators which are then measured against a red, amber and green system in terms of the action to be taken. These findings are passed to schools to highlight the work which may need to be taken forward with the child.

The Service Manager added that this was a major piece of work and at present there was no funding to take it forward. It was noted that the Member had raised the matter in Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee on a number of occasions and the Service Manager advised that the request had not been ignored, there was no aspirations from Welsh Government to take the project in this direction.

The Member felt that this was a failing of Welsh Government and it should be pursued to monitor the progress of pupils in flying start areas. Although, the Member recognised the excellent work and welcomed roll out across Blaenau Gwent could being secured.

A question was raised in relation to 'hubs' in the respective areas, the Service Manager informed that a number of places had been looked at in the Brynmawr Ward, however these were out of budget. Following a conversation with the Head Teacher in Blaen-y-Cwm Primary School a room had been acquired within the school.

The Chair thanked the officer for an excellent report and for the work undertaken by the Team.

The Committee AGREED that the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee noted the roll-out outlined for 2022 (Option 1).

No. 7

**BLAENAU GWENT PARTICIPATORY BUDGET PROGRAMME:
"COMMUNITY VOICE, COMMUNITY CHOICE"**

Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Policy and Partnerships.

The Policy Officer (PSB) advised that the report provided an update about the results of the Blaenau Gwent "Community Voice, Community Choice" Participatory Budget programme. The Policy Officer spoke in detail to the report and highlighted the key points.

A Member raised concerns in relation to the issues with the process for the programme and stated that many people struggled to join zoom calls and were therefore not able to vote. The Member felt that as there was no real lockdown in place at the time the process could have been undertaken in person with the necessary social distancing in place. The Member stated that not everyone was not digitally equipped or confident to take part in virtual meetings.

The Member also noted his concerns that monies were being awarded to projects outside of Blaenau Gwent.

The Service Manager Policy and Partnerships noted the concerns and advised that although the situation was not ideal the Council needed to be mindful of the pandemic and take forward the project from a public safety aspect. It was added that the process was carried in the safest manner and followed the Gwent Region processes. The Service Manager appreciated the digital platform could be restricted obviously with the restrictions in place there was a need to take forward the process in the most appropriate way.

In terms of monies being awarded outside of Blaenau Gwent, the Service Manager advised that the organisations maybe based outside of the Borough but they operated within the Borough as the services were for the people of Blaenau Gwent.

The Service Manager continued that the monies had now been distributed with contracts signed and projects were now in the delivery stage. The outcomes of the projects would be presented next year and although some concerns had been raised it was felt that the events were welcomed.

The Policy Officer (PSB) added that the Council controlled the funding and project plans would be monitored going forward to ensure their plans was on track to deliver the projects. An update on projects would be presented to the next Committee.

The Committee AGREED the report and accepted the report as provided prior to it being submitted to the Public Services Board (Option 1).

Councillor M. Moore left the meeting at this juncture.

No. 8

SUSTAINABLE FOOD PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME
PROGRESS UPDATE

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Chief Executive and Director of Communities and Housing, Tai Calon Community Housing. The Blaenau Gwent Sustainable Food Co-ordinator, Tai Calon gave a comprehensive update on the Sustainable Food Partnership Programme.

A Member asked if foodbanks/groups promoted healthy eating and had fast food outlets been challenged to change their options on offer.

The Co-ordinator advised that healthy eating was a 'hot topic' at the moment and referred to the changes made in sugary drinks. It was hoped that these changes would be applied in the food industry. The food debate was on the agenda for consideration at by the Welsh Assembly and the Co-ordinator felt that it would be interesting to see the outcome of these discussions.

The Member appreciated that tackling the fast food outlets was a major change nationally, however the Member felt that it was important that we attempt to tackle the issues more locally. It was informed that some groups provided an education around healthy eating and there was a lot of work being undertaken to obtain more fresh fruit and vegetables in foodbanks. However, it was also important to ensure individuals had access to cookers and were taught how to follow recipes to place fruit and vegetables in their everyday diets. These are key areas in changing lifestyles which would also be reliant on a family's income, therefore it was a need for good local economies.

The Co-ordinator added that one of promising spaces to tackle these issues were in with schools and there were lots of exciting projects being taken through schools, however it was stated that we could not force families or individuals to eat the right foods.

The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and noted the report and appendices as provided (Option 1).
