



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

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

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1.0 Delivery Confidence Assessment (DCA)

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



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

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

1.1 Delivery Confidence Assessment

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

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

2.0 Summary of Report Recommendations

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

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

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

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

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



3.0 Comments from the SRO

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

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

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

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



4.0 Background

The aims of the Programme:

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

The driving force for the Programme:

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

The procurement/delivery status:

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

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



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

Current position regarding OGC Gateway™ Reviews:

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

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

5.0 Purposes and conduct of the OGC Gateway Review

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

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

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

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

6.0 Acknowledgement

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



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

7.0 Scope of the Review

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

8.0 Review Team findings and recommendations

8.1: Gate 5: Review of operating phase

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

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

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



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

8.2: Gate 5: Business Case and benefits management

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

8.4: Gate 0: Policy and business context

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

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

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

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

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

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

8.5: Gate 0: Business Case and stakeholders



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

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

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

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

8.6: Gate 0: Readiness for the next phase

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

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

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

9.0 Next Assurance Review

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



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

ANNEX A

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



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

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

Purposes of the OGC Gateway Review 0: Strategic assessment:

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



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

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ANNEX B

List of Interviewees

The following stakeholders were interviewed during the review:

Interviewees:

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



ANNEX C

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

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