

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **15th January 2020**

Report Subject: **21st Century Schools Programme - Gateway Review**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Joanne Collins, Executive Member for Education**

Report Submitted by: **Lynn Phillips, Head of Education Transformation**

| Reporting Pathway (Dates to be Entered) | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|----------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Executive Committee | Council | Other (please state) |
| ✓ | 05.11.19 | 20.12.19 | | | 15.01.20 | 29.01.20 | | |

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an opportunity for Members to scrutinise the 21st Century Schools Programme, particularly the outcome of the Welsh Government facilitated Gateway Review (September 2019).

2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Welsh Government has an expectation that each Council participates in the Gateway Review process, as part of the 21st Century Schools Programme. The Gateway Review process is a form of peer support, which tests the Council's readiness and capacity to deliver against the programme.
 - 2.2 The Council originally participated in a Gateway Review in October 2013, which highlighted a delivery confidence assessment of Amber. The initial Gateway Review was followed-up by a further review in November 2014 and that review found that the Council had continued to make sound progress, and therefore, was awarded a delivery confidence assessment of Amber/Green. The second Gateway Review report's key recommendation identified that there was a need to adopt a formal approach to 21st Century Schools programme management arrangements and embed the methods and techniques to secure wider benefits for the Council.
 - 2.3 The Education Directorate invited Welsh Government to undertake a third Gateway Review during July 2017 and the final report identified that the delivery confidence assessment for the 21st Century Schools Band A Programme was Green/Amber.
 - 2.4 Most recently, the Council has invited the WG to facilitate the fourth Gateway Review that took place during September 2019. The Education Transformation team agreed with the review team 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.

- 2.5 For Band A, based upon a Gateway 5, the review team considered that the delivery confidence assessment is Green.
- 2.6 For Band B, based upon a Gateway 0, the review team considered that the delivery confidence assessment is Amber, due to being in the early stages of the tranche.
- 2.7 The review's full report is attached as Appendix 1 and the three recommendations are detailed 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 |

3. Options for Recommendation

The options for Scrutiny to consider are:

- 3.1 Option1: Members scrutinise the information detailed within the report, thereby contributing to the continuous self-evaluation of the service prior to making appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee.
- 3.2 Option 2: Accept the report as provided.

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

- 4.1 Efficient Council – To develop a more commercial organisation to generate income and deliver cost reductions to make local services sustainable.
- 4.2 Education – To improve the quality of our education services and our school buildings to help learners achieve great outcomes and to continue to support school leaders to help our pupils achieve their ambitions.

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 ***Impact on Budget***

The Council's Band B programme will secure circa £25m capital funding, including the Welsh medium proposal for a range of new school buildings/improvements across the school estate. The Welsh Government's contribution is 65% of the total investment. The Council has continued to access WG capital funds for each project through the development and submission of business cases to Welsh Government based upon H.M. Treasury's five case business model.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Raising educational standards is a strategic risk on the Corporate Risk Register (CRR). The 21st Century Schools Programme proposals presented within this report will contribute to mitigating this risk. Moreover, there are very robust risk management arrangements in place for the 21st Century Schools Programme, with identified risks regularly reported to the 21st Century Schools Partnership Board via highlight reporting processes.

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no direct Legal implications associated with the Gateway Review.

5.4. ***Human Resources***

There are no direct staffing implications, however, in line with the Gateway Review findings there will be an additional post created in the Education Transformation team funded via the 21st Century Schools capital funding for the programme.

6. Supporting Evidence:

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

The report highlights that the 21st Century Schools programme management arrangements are to be commended. The review team stated 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'.

Performance will continue to be monitored closely, however, to ensure the full delivery of the Band B initiative.

- 6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***
The 21st Century Schools Programme will contribute to raising educational standards across the board.
- 6.3 ***Involvement***
The 21st Century Schools Programme contributes to the strategic direction for the school estate across the County Borough. The 21st Century Schools Partnership Board has representation from across all services within the Council. There are also statutory requirements to involve stakeholders in school re-organisation proposals linked to the WG's School Organisation Code (2013).
- 6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term***
The 21st Century Schools Programme is a long-term programme that spans the period 2014 to 2034. The Band B element covers the period 2019 to 2025.
- 6.5 ***Preventative Focus***
The 21st Century Schools Programme will take a preventative approach to learners' needs and place an emphasis on delivering a school estate that is fit for purpose that contributes to raising educational standards, which is a Council priority.
- 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***
The Vision for Education is based upon a school led self-improving collaborative approach and the 21st Century Schools Programme will play a role in improving partnership arrangements with the schools and their respective communities e.g. the community focussed schools agenda.
- 6.7 ***Integration***
The 21st Century Schools Programme is a key element in responding to the Council's wellbeing goals for all learners, particularly learners with Additional Learning Needs.
- 6.8 ***EqIA***
All of the 21st Century Schools projects are equality impact assessed.
7. ***Monitoring Arrangements***
The Council is committed to the provision of an improved school estate to support raising educational standards. The Gateway Review provides the Council with a high level of assurance that the delivery of the programme is on track. The report's findings also recognise the good progress that the Council has made in the delivery of the 21st Century Schools initiative, including planning and preparedness for the Band B programme. The Gateway Review report is part of the Scrutiny/Executive forward work programme, therefore, the report is presented to Scrutiny Committee for discussion in the first instance.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

Appendix 1 - Gateway Review Report