

Committee: **Overview Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **3rd March 2020**

Report Subject: **Bridging the Gap Review - Update Strategic use of Grants - Children and Communities Grant**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader / Executive Member Corporate Services
Councillor John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Bernadette Elias, Head of Governance and Partnerships
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Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	28.02.20	20.02.20			03.03.20		26.03.20	

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to provide an update in relation to the Bridging the Gap review on the Strategic Use of Grants with a focus in phase one on the Children and Communities Grant (CCG).

2. Scope and Background

2.1 Bridging the Gap - Strategic Use of Grants review

2.1.1 In 2018 the Wales Audit Office (WAO) undertook a Financial Resilience review which included a focus on how effectively the Council maximises funding opportunities. As part of findings the WAO reported that there was a lack of corporate coordination of grant applications and central records of grants and concluded that a more strategic use of grants was needed.

2.1.2 A review on the Strategic use of Grants has been included in the Bridging the Gap programme and the WAO proposals for improvement informed the scope of the review. The Head of Governance and Partnerships is the review sponsor.

2.1.3 The aim of the review is to facilitate improved organisational sight and greater understanding of the impact of grants for Blaenau Gwent. The review considers how to maximise the benefits of the grants through closer working across all services including a better understanding of the impact of the removal of grants and the potential risk and/or opportunity in relation to core funding.

2.2 Phase 1 - Children and Communities Grant

2.2.1 The Children and Communities grant sits under the Flexible Funding Programme which came into being April 2019. CCG is an integral element of the Use of Grants review and has been the main focus of the initial phase of the project.

2.2.2 The Flexible Funding programme is the latest approach from Welsh Government to ensure different grants work together with the aim of providing greater local authority autonomy in service delivery, particularly around joint planning and commissioning of services to support better outcomes. This extra freedom aims to allow for a more strategic approach in delivering early intervention, prevention and support.

2.2.3 Ministers have set clear expectations that the Children and Communities Grant (CCG) and the Housing Support Grant (HSG) which sits under the Flexible Funding programme should work in a seamless fashion, providing integrated services where appropriate.

2.2.4 The seven programmes that sit under the Children and Communities Grant are:

1. Families First
2. Flying Start
3. Childcare and Play (formerly called 'Out of School Childcare Grant')
4. Communities for Work Plus (CfW+)
5. Legacy Fund
6. Promoting Positive Engagement for Young People at Risk of Offending
7. St David's Day Fund

2.2.5 Welsh Government issued clear Guidance for 2019/20 for the delivery of each of the 7 programmes listed above. The 2019/20 budget allocation for each of the 7 programmes can be found under section 5.1 of this report.

2.2.6 The Head of Children's Services was asked to lead on bringing together the 7 programmes under the CCG with a key objective of amalgamating these programmes under a single grant to enable the local authority to respond with innovative approaches to improve service delivery.

2.2.7 As a result, a CCG steering group was set up with the following responsibilities:

- Objectively analyse the activities, performance and financials of each programme individually and collectively to identify possible opportunities for efficiencies and service improvement;
- To understand the wider programme of delivery, delivered by the third sector to identify opportunities for collaborative working arrangements;

- To report progress to the Corporate Leadership Team, Members, Executive and the Public Service Board;
- To collate and submit the data monitoring required by Welsh Government in relation to the CCG within the required timescales;
- To collate and submit the financial claim form required by Welsh Government within the required timescales; and
- Agree to set up working groups as required to undertake specific pieces of work bringing other professionals/partners in as required.

The CCG steering group has met regularly throughout 2019 and plan to continue to do so throughout 2020.

2.2.8 In relation to the 7 programmes it is important to note that Communities for Work plus (CfW+) is delivered by GAVO not the Local Authority. This situation is unique to Blaenau Gwent as the other 21 local authorities in Wales deliver this programme in house. That said GAVO has been an active part of the CCG steering group. It is also important to note that despite Welsh Government initially saying the Legacy Fund will cease at the end of March 2020 this is now not the case. Welsh Government has confirmed it will continue to the end of this Assembly term.

2.2.9 One of the first pieces of work the CCG steering group undertook was a logic mapping exercise. This involved all 7 programme leads mapping what inputs, outputs and outcomes each of their programmes had delivered. This information was then analysed which then led onto a number of work streams being set up.

2.2.10 The first work stream examined the services delivered by each of the 7 programmes and established there is little duplication of service delivery. Some of the programmes are delivering the same service i.e. parenting, however, they are targeting different sections of the population in Blaenau Gwent.

2.2.11 The second work stream examined the possibility of making efficiencies in relation to the way in which the grants were administered. It was established there were no efficiencies to be made at this time as a number of grants were being administered by core services and not grant funded services. What will happen from January 2020 is a move for the 6 grants within the Local Authority to be supported by one central grant funded team. Bringing this work under 1 team will allow a more in-depth review to occur during 2020 to establish the support is effective and efficient.

2.2.12 The third work stream focused on the legacy fund due to the message from Welsh Government that it would be ending on the 31st of March 2020. The group undertook a review of all the programmes that are being funded to ensure all the projects under this fund have either established sustainability within their organisations or developed exit strategies. A full report on this

area of work has been presented to Regeneration Scrutiny Committee for information in December 2019. In light of the legacy fund continuing there will need to be a discussion/process for considering where this grant funding will be allocated for 2020/21 which **must** be in line with the guidance from Welsh Government.

2.2.13 Going forward in 2020 the Children and Communities Grant will be responsible for delivering the following 7 programmes:

- 1 Families First
- 2 Flying Start
- 3 Childcare and Play
- 4 Communities for Work Plus (**delivered by GAVO**)
- 5 Legacy Fund
- 6 Promoting Positive Engagement for Young People at Risk of Offending
- 7 St David's Day Fund

2.2.14 Welsh Government is currently revising the guidance for the delivery of each of these programmes however it is unlikely to significantly change. They continue to be clear that there should be a join up of service delivery across the CCG programmes where appropriate, with no duplication of services. There should also be the flexibility of moving funding between the programmes when this is felt to be appropriate.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1**

That the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee

- i. Consider the progress made to date and the proposed next phases of the Strategic Use of Grants review
- ii. Consider the progress made to date on the Children and Communities grant
- iii. Receive further updates on the Strategic Use of Grants review and CCG as part of the committee forward work programme; and
- iv. The CCG Steering Group continues to oversee and implement the delivery programme and provides an annual report on progress to Scrutiny, Executive and the PSB. 6 monthly reporting will be made the Corporate Leadership Team

Option 2

- i. Consider and provide specific comment on the progress made to date and the proposed next phases of the strategic use of grants review
- ii. Consider and provide specific comments on the progress made to date the Children and Communities grant
- iii. Receive further updates as part of the committee forward work programme; and
- iv. The CCG Steering Group continues to oversee and implement the delivery programme and provides an annual report on progress to

scrutiny, executive and the PSB. 6 monthly reporting will be made the Corporate Leadership Team

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

Council Priorities

As part of the Strategic use of Grants review the development of the grant register included identifying links of grant funding to Council priorities.

The programmes under the CCG focus on early intervention prevention and support. As such they will support the following priorities outlined under the corporate plan:

- To work with people to make sure they have a say in achieving what matters to them;
- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater;
- To work with our partners including Aneurin Bevan Health Board and neighbouring authorities to deliver integrated responsive care and support;
- To promote and facilitate new ways of delivering health and social care involving key partners and our communities; and
- To develop a partnership approach to reducing and alleviating the impacts of Poverty.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

Figure 1 outlines the grant income for 2019/20

Portfolio	Number of Grants	Value
Corporate Services	7	281,301
Economy	12	1,902,871
Education	14	1,552,895
Education Schools	11	5,893,615
Environment	12	824,851
F M & S	1	300,000
Infrastructure	9	209,250
Social Services CS	15	8,159,264
Social Services AS	3	3,453,818
Social Services WDP	1	1,411,315
2019/20 Grant Income		23,989,180

Figure 2 below outlines the total grant money aligned to each CCG programme for 2019/20.

The budget for 2020/21 has been released. This amounts to £4,069,099. Work will now be done to apportion money to each programme.

Figure 2
2019/20 Budget

Programme	Budget
Flying Start	£2,208,616
Families First	£1,143,183
Communities 4 Work Plus (funding for this goes directly to GAVO)	£856,753
Legacy Fund	£464,463
Promoting Positive Engagement for YP	£148,016
Childcare and Play	£73,391
St David's Day Fund (this will reduce to £29,425 in 20/21)	£58,851

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Improved strategic planning and oversight of grants as a funding stream will support a better understanding of the impact of the removal of grants and the potential risk and/or opportunity in relation to core funding.

As with all grant funded projects there is a risk of the grant stopping and the needs of children and families not being met.

To mitigate against this each of the programmes under the CCG are supporting families to become more self-determining, drawing on their own naturally occurring support networks to reduce the need for statutory services.

A further risk to be highlighted is that the flexibility under the CCG is limited due to the CCG guidance stipulating the 7 programmes still needing to be delivered. This limits the development of new approaches being developed.

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal issues relating to this report

5.4 **Human Resources**

The Strategic Use of Grants review has established a core working group of officers from Corporate Services. The involvement of service area representatives for the specific review areas is vital and forms part of the review process.

All staff delivering the programmes under the CCG are on 12 month fixed term contracts. These are renewed each year. However, many staff have been on fixed term contracts for many years and will have accrued employment rights. If the grants were to stop work would need to be done to ensure robust exit strategies.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

Bridging the Gap - Strategic use of Grants review

6.1.1 Work undertaken to date includes the development of an organisational register of revenue grant income including:

- Separating grants by portfolio and establishing the grant income position and spend profile;
- Identification of links of grant monies to Council priorities, key strategies and other Bridging the gap reviews; and
- Enhancing functionality to automate inputted data which keeps the register live, reducing duplication and effort.

6.1.2 Grant income for 2019/20 of 23,989,180 (figure 1 above) has been identified. A number of key issues have been identified to facilitate improved strategic planning of this funding stream:

- How to strategically manage grants more effectively alongside other funding streams, including maintaining a central record of potential and successful grant applications;
- Ensure better integration of applications for grants into the budget setting process including other Bridging the Gap reviews; and
- Consideration of review processes for grants to ensure they deliver outcomes and value for money.

6.1.3 A phased approach to the review for 2020/21 is proposed:

- Phase 1 - CCG review (delivery plan to be in place by April 2020)
- Phase 2 - Adult Social Services, Integrated Care Fund (scoping February/March 2020)
- Phase 3 - Economy (scoping April/ May 2020)

6.1.4 **Children and Communities Grant**

Welsh Government require Quarterly reporting on the work undertaken under the CCG. Quarters 1 and 2 have been completed which mainly comprises of a narrative outlining the progress which has been made in relation to bringing the grant under one umbrella. In addition, some of the programmes, Flying

Start, Families First and the St David's Day fund have to provide Quarterly updates on their activity.

- 6.1.5 Welsh Government is in the process of finalising an outcomes framework. It is anticipated this will replace the existing reporting frameworks from April 2020

Governance arrangements

6.1.6 **Strategic use of Grants review**

It is proposed that the governance of the Use of Grants and monitoring of the Grants Register is incorporated within the terms of reference for the Strategic Commissioning Group which is being established following the Bridging the Gap review on Third Party Spend.

This would provide the opportunity for the grants register to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis and provide a forum for appropriate check and challenge.

It is proposed that the Strategic Commissioning Group would report into CLT on the organisational grants register on a quarterly basis. Updates on the Bridging the Gap review - Strategic use of Grants would form part of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Forward Work Programme.

Children and Communities Grant

The CCG Steering Group continue to meet and take responsibility for the smooth programme delivery, the future shaping of programmes and continued reporting to Welsh Government; and Provide an annual report on progress to Scrutiny, Executive and the PSB on an annual basis. 6 monthly reports will be provided to the Corporate Leadership Team

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

The aim of the strategic use of grants review is to facilitate improved organisational sight and greater understanding of the impact of grants for Blaenau Gwent.

The public can expect the programmes delivered under the CCG to meet the requirements as laid out from Welsh Government. All of the programmes focus on early intervention, prevention and support.

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

The CCG guidance requires local authorities to set out how they intend to engage with and involve local communities and use their responses to inform their long term vision and delivery plans. All of the programmes under the CCG have systems in place to gather feedback on services being delivered. Some programmes are also using social media to support with this for example Flying Start has a Facebook page to promote the service and receive feedback.

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

The CCG Steering group will ensure the delivery plan for 2020/21 encompasses the five ways of working under the Future Generation Act which includes planning for the long term.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

One of the primary aims of the programmes delivered under the CCG is to prevent needs from escalating. This not only relates to preventing families requiring the interventions from Statutory Services but also working with families to support them out of poverty via routes to employment.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

As part of the work going forward the Local Authority will need to demonstrate how it ensures the programmes under the CCG grant is aligning with the well-being objectives of the Public Services Board and the aims of other key partners and how evidence from the well-being plans and needs assessments have been incorporated. It is important to demonstrate that this grant is providing additional support for the most disadvantaged.

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

The strategic use of grants review includes all service areas and the work undertaken to date aims to bring improved organisational sight of grant funding to maximise this funding stream.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 **Strategic use of Grants**

It is proposed that the Strategic Commissioning Group being established, report into CLT on the organisational grants register on a quarterly basis. Updates on the Bridging the Gap review – Strategic use of Grants would form part of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Forward Work Programme.

CCG

Welsh Government requires quarterly reporting on progress. This will include reporting on outcomes from April 2020 under the new framework being developed by Welsh Government.

In addition, the CCG steering group will oversee the delivery of the programmes and provide an annual report to, Scrutiny, Executive and the PSB and 6 monthly reports to CLT

Background Documents / Electronic Links