

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

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

Report Subject: **Blaenau Gwent - Post 16 Partnership Agreement**

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

Report Submitted by: **Joanne Sims, Youth Service Manager**

Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
x	x	01.09.20			15.09.20	14.10.20		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members of the Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to scrutinise a proposal to establish a Blaenau Gwent Post 16 Partnership Board to oversee the strategic development of academic and vocational provision for learners across the County Borough.

2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone was established in 2012/2013, following a review of post 16 provision across the County Borough. The post 16 review was a highly contentious school re-organisation project that involved the removal of three sixth forms from secondary schools and the development of a tertiary partnership model in association with Coleg Gwent. The Council project managed the new Learning Zone building to include design, procurement and construction of the £33m post 16 learning establishment.

 - 2.2 There is currently a strong partnership arrangement between the Council and Coleg Gwent, which has matured during recent years. The Learning Zone delivers an annual performance report to the Council, which features as a key component of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee's forward work programme, featuring as part on the Member Briefing Programme.

 - 2.3 In addition to the Learning Zone, a number of post 16 Work Based Learning organisations provide alternative training opportunities across Blaenau Gwent. These organisations include ACT, Sgiliau (a sub contracted provider for ITEC), and Llamau. Furthermore, an Aspire Apprenticeship programme is delivered by BGCBC and further opportunities are available through organisations such as Tai Calon. These partners are active members of the Raising Aspirations Group (RAG), a strategic multi-agency partnership co-ordinating the work around young people who are at risk of becoming or are currently NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

2.4 The Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone's performance in 2020 continues to improve overall. The transformation of post 16 provision across the County Borough has delivered:

- more post 16 learners,
- a greater range of courses, particularly for vocational provision;
- improved attainment levels, in most measures.

2.5 The partnership between the Council and Coleg Gwent has matured and a systematic approach is in place to share data at a strategic and operational level. The partnership will be developed further through the establishment of a Post 16 Partnership Board with representation from the Education Directorate, Coleg Gwent, work based learning providers and Blaenau Gwent secondary school settings. There will also be representation from colleagues in Regeneration to encompass the broader skills and economic development agenda, contributing towards the Blaenau Gwent Employment and Skills Plan. The intention is for the Partnership Board to be in place by the Autumn term 2020. The draft Terms of Reference for the Blaenau Gwent Post 16 Partnership Board are attached in Appendix 1 and Members' views are sought on the proposed agreement.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 This report has been discussed and agreed by Education DMT and CLT prior to submission to Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee. Members are requested to:

Option 1: To accept the report's proposals as presented in the draft Partnership Agreement.

Option 2: Members are requested to scrutinise the information detailed within the report and make appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee for final approval.

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

4.1 **Corporate Plan Priorities**

Education is a key priority in the Corporate Improvement Plan and the provision of effective post 16 learning opportunities are critical to securing improved life chances for young people across the County Borough.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget***

The establishment of the Post 16 Partnership Board and the delivery of the proposed agreement will have no direct financial implications for the Council, however, there will need to be the effective use of existing resources from all partners to secure added value and better outcomes for all of our learners.

5.2 ***Risk***

The risk of failing to secure improved educational outcomes features on the Corporate Risk Register (CRR), therefore, the establishment of a Post 16 Partnership Board will contribute to mitigating the risk for learners leaving statutory age education provision across the County Borough.

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no direct Legal implications associated with this report.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

There are no direct Human Resources implications associated with this report other than the allocation of time from relevant officers to facilitate the establishment of the Post 16 Partnership Board.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

The performance of post 16 learners across the County Borough is shown in the attached FADE document (Appendix 2), which covers both academic and vocational aspects of study. The provisional performance in academic year 2019-20 will be presented to Members as part of the Member Development Programme later in the Autumn term.

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

It is expected that the Partnership Board will continue to improve post 16 outcomes across the County Borough.

6.3 ***Involvement***

The Partnership Board has been discussed with the key partners and there is a strong desire to move forward in a truly collaborative fashion. There will be a need to engage with post 16 learners once the formal arrangements are adopted to seek their views on the future of provision in order to meet their needs.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term***

The Partnership Board will need to plan in the short, medium and long term to secure improved educational outcomes for learners. There will be a forward work plan and key priorities have initially been identified for all partners to work towards in the form of outcome statements, discussed in the draft Partnership Agreement.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The Partnership Board will oversee all aspects of post 16 provision, however, many of the proposed partners are also members of the Raising Aspirations Group (RAG), that co-ordinates the work around young people who are at risk of becoming or are currently NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Effective collaboration is at the heart of the Partnership Board and the proposed agreement. To facilitate this, all parties will commit to adopt the following principles in their dealings with each other:

- Build trust and a mutual respect for each other's roles and responsibilities;
- Committed to openness, honesty and transparency in communications;
- Adopt a positive and constructive approach demonstrating our commitment to work with and learn from each other;
- Ensure there is early discussion of emerging issues to ensure a 'no surprises' culture;
- Share a commitment to ensuring high quality outcomes; and,
- Agree a formal process for disagreement resolution and always seek positive solutions for partners, learners and their families.

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

Education and Regeneration will work in an integrated way to support the broader economic impact, particularly relating the post 16 skills agenda.

6.8 ***EqIA***

There is no requirement for an EQIA assessment as all partners will have their own Equality Planning arrangements in place.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Partnership Board will aim to create a culture of accountability to improve outcomes for all post 16 learners. Moreover, subject to agreement of the proposal, the monitoring the outcomes for post 16 learners will feature in the Scrutiny/Executive Forward Work Programmes.

8. **Background Documents / Electronic Links**

- Appendix 1 – Draft Partnership Agreement
- Appendix 2 – Post 16 FADE