

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

**SUBJECT: SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE –
22ND FEBRUARY, 2021**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

**PRESENT: Leader of the Council/
Executive Member Corporate Services
Councillor N.J. Daniels (CHAIR)**

**Deputy Leader/Executive Member –
Regeneration & Economic Development
Councillor D. Davies**

**Executive Member – Education
Councillor J. Collins**

**Executive Member – Environment
Councillor J. Wilkins**

**Executive Member – Social Services
Councillor J. Mason**

**WITH: Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services
Corporate Director Education
Chief Officer Resources
Interim Chief Officer Commercial
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
Press Officer**

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>No apologies for absence were received.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest and dispensations were received.</p>	
	<p><u>DECISION ITEM – EDUCATION</u></p>	
No. 4	<p><u>WELSH-MEDIUM PRIMARY SCHOOL: CONSULTATION OUT-TURN REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Education advised that the report provided a detailed overview of the statutory consultation and responses associated with the proposal to build a new Welsh Medium primary school with co-located Childcare provision in the Sirhowy Valley.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Education further spoke to the report and outlined public engagement overview, social media engagement, thematic analysis, the response from children and young people and Estyn. The Corporate Director also drew Members attention to the responses received against the proposal and the financial implications associated with the proposal.</p>	

The Corporate Director noted that there would be no capital costs implications for the Council as 100% funding had been awarded with no match funding requirement. However, there would be revenue and individual school budget costs associated with the proposal and the Corporate Director provided an overview of costs as detailed in the report.

The Executive Member for Education was pleased to see the level of responses received for the consultation, particularly during these difficult circumstances. The Executive Member asked the Corporate Director to provide an explanation on proceeding to statutory notice and the next steps.

The Corporate Director Education advised that the preferred option is to proceed to statutory notice, should the Executive decide this course of action, the next steps would be to publish the statutory notice for 28 days to allow stakeholders to make any objections. At the end of the statutory notice period the responses would be reported back and should there be any objections, we would respond to these objections with a view to answering the reason for objection. The Corporate Director stated that this was the normal process of in terms of a school reorganisation proposal such as this one.

The Leader advised that the report provided an opportunity to assess and consider the responses received. It was reported that other detailed discussions around the financial aspect had been considered at the December meeting of the Executive where it was agreed to go out to consultation. The Leader added that the consultation had been undertaken with trepidation with regard to the current climate and had wondered the level of responses to be received. However, he had been heartened by the responses, including the response from Estyn which had been very solid.

The Deputy Leader concurred with the comments raised and felt that during these difficult times the staff had undertaken an excellent job. From the responses it was now important to take the next steps and move forward with the proposal. The Deputy Leader added that there was commitment to Welsh Government in terms of increasing Welsh Education in Blaenau Gwent and the Authority had the funding to proceed.

The Executive Member for Education concurred with the comments in terms of the level of consultation and was also pleased to see support from Estyn. The Executive Member added that although there were financial risks in taking this proposal forward the risk for not adhering to the Authority's WESP commitments far outweighed not proceeding with the proposal and proposed Option 1 for approval. It was thereupon unanimously

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely the Executive considered and accepted the outturn report, associated documents and course of action, including proceeding to Statutory Notice