

DRAFT AGENDA

ID	2217
Committee	Pwllgor Craffu Addysg a Dysgu
Date	09/02/2021
Attendees	<p>Cynghorwyr Haydn Trollope (Cadeirydd)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Julie Holt (Is-gadeirydd)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Derrick Bevan (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Garth Collier (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Martin Cook (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Malcolm Day (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr D. Lyn Elias (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr John Hill (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Clive Meredith (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr John C. Morgan (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorydd John P. Morgan (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Lee Parsons (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Tommy Smith (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Bob Summers (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr David Wilkshire (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Mr. Tim Baxter (Co-Optee)</p> <p>Mr. Alun Williams (Co-Optee)</p> <p>Lynn Phillips (Swyddog)</p> <p>Michelle Jones (Swyddog)</p> <p>Gavin Metheringham (Swyddog)</p> <p>Claire Gardner (Swyddog)</p> <p>Joanne Sims (Swyddog)</p> <p>Gemma Wasley (Swyddog)</p> <p>Liz Thomas (Swyddog)</p> <p>Gwasanaethau Democrataidd (Notify)</p> <p>Leeann Turner (Secretary)</p> <p>Pob Cynghorydd (Notify)</p> <p>Louise Bishop (Notify)</p> <p>Sean Scannell (Notify)</p> <p>Anne-Louise Clark (Notify)</p> <p>Richard Crook (Notify)</p> <p>Rhian Hayden (Notify)</p> <p>Damien McCann (Notify)</p> <p>Michelle Morris (Notify)</p> <p>Steve Berry (Swyddog)</p> <p>Andrea Jones (Swyddog)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Joanne Collins (Notify)</p>

Item ID	4310
Item Title	Cyfieithu ar y Pryd

Summary	Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, mae angen o leiaf 3 diwrnod gwaith o rybudd os dymunwch wneud hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais.
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Item ID	4311
Item Title	Ymddiheuriadau
Summary	Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

Item ID	4312
Item Title	Datganiadau Buddiant a Goddefebau
Summary	Ystyried unrhyw ddatganiadau buddiant a goddefebau a wnaed.

Item ID	4313
Item Title	Cofnodion Pwyllgor Craffu Addysg a Dysgu
Summary	Derbyn cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Addysg a Dysgu a gynhaliwyd ar 15 Rhagfyr 2020. (Dylid nodi mai dim ond er pwyntiau cywirdeb y cyflwynir y cofnodion).

Item ID	4320
Item Title	Dalen Weithredu – 15 Rhagfyr 2020
Summary	Derbyn y Ddalen Weithredu..

Item ID	4321
Item Title	Parodrwydd ar gyfer y Ddeddf Anghenion Dysgu Ychwanegol
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Rheolwr Gwasanaeth Cynhwysiant.

Item ID	4322
Item Title	Cynnydd Band B Ysgolion yr 21ain Ganrif
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Rheolwr Trawsnewid Addysg.

Item ID	4323
Item Title	Adroddiad Perfformiad Gwasanaeth Ieuentid 2019 – 2020
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Rheolwr Gwasanaeth Ieuentid.

Item ID	4324
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Item Title	Y defnydd o Ymgynghorwyr
Summary	Ystyriedc adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Addysg.

Item ID	4325
Item Title	Blaenraglen Gwaith: 9 Mawrth 2021
Summary	Derbyn yr adroddiad.

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15TH DECEMBER, 2020

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H. TROLLOPE (CHAIR)

Councillors: J. Holt
D. Bevan
M. Cook
M. Day
L. Elias
J. Hill
C. Meredith
J.C. Morgan
J.P. Morgan
T. Smith
B. Summers
D. Wilkshire

Co-opted Member

A. Williams

Executive Member – Education

Councillor J. Collins

AND: Corporate Director of Education
Service Manager Inclusion
Education Transformation Manager
SRS Representatives x 2
Press & Publicity Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ALSO: Representative of EAS
Sarah Davies, Principal Challenge Advisor EAS

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
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>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Collier and L. Parsons.</p> <p><u>Co-opted Member</u> T. Baxter</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The Chair and Councillors J.C. Morgan and T. Smith declared an interest in Item 5 – Welsh-medium Education Consultation Proposal / Cynnig ymgynghori ar addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 3rd November, 2020 were submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Summary of inspection outcomes for Educational Establishments – autumn term 2019 and spring term 2020</u></p> <p>In relation to the above item a Member requested that his question regarding Brynmawr Foundation School, be included in the Minutes to show scrutiny challenge. The report read:-</p> <p>“In a majority of lessons, pupils of all abilities generally do not make enough progress. They do not recall or use prior learning well enough, nor do they develop their skills sufficiently, particularly in literacy and numeracy. This is an important shortcoming.”</p>	

The Member wanted assurances that Brynmawr Foundation School were engaging in professional learning with other schools and other organisations.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.

VERBAL UPDATE - COVID-19 PANDEMIC

At the request of the Chair, the Corporate Director of Education provided a verbal update on the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Blaenau Gwent, across the whole of the school estate had moved to remote learning from the 10th December. The decision was not taken lightly and feedback from Headteachers was that remote learning was working well, with learners continuing to be engaged.

A Welsh Government directive was issued around two aspects of provision. The first aspect, vulnerable learner provision, he felt the Authority were in a secure position in relation to vulnerable learner provision as there was strong provision in place to support learners that were Children Looked After and those learners that were on the Child Protection Register whose families may require support.

The second aspect of the directive was around key worker childcare provision prior to the Christmas break. A special Headteachers meeting had been held and they had agreed that a communication be sent out to parents for them to advise of any childcare requirements that maybe needed for Thursday and Friday this week. It had been made clear that this should only be as a last resort due to learners being safer within home settings. The Director advised Members that the Authority was responding to the directive.

The officer continued, that Headteachers and the Council were working towards the 4th January start to the new term and were anticipating further information from the Welsh Government in terms of expectations for provision for the spring term for schools.

A Member enquired regarding the Welsh Government's announcement around testing all pupils in schools. The

Director of Education said that this was not expected to have this in place from the start of term, they were awaiting further details from the Welsh Government around testing provision in schools.

A Member said that, as a group, they had written to the Director of Education in November to request a switch to blended learning, he expressed his thanks to the Director of Education and his staff on the decision to switch to blended learning. He understood that it had been a difficult decision but infection rates had been rising fast in Blaenau Gwent with some parents removing their children from school which resulted in school numbers falling to half of what they should have been. He felt that teachers and staff could rest securely, without the involvement of Track and Trace, over the Christmas period. As a Councillor, School Governor and as a grandparent, he thanked the Director for making the difficult decision.

Members of the Scrutiny Committee also expressed their thanks to the Director and his staff for their hard work and diligence over the past challenging and difficult year.

The Director of Education thanked Members for their comments and reiterated that the decision was not taken lightly, but local circumstances meant that a number of schools were in a very precarious position. After consultation with Headteachers, he felt it had been a proportionate response based upon the challenges that were faced at that time.

A Member raised concerns regarding risk assessments for pupils with complex needs whose parents were keyworkers and needed their children to attend the school hubs. The Director of Education said that they would liaise with Health & Safety colleagues and Headteachers. He reiterated that information was awaited from parents and carers regarding their requests for the keyworker provision. Risk assessments would be carried out and consideration would be given to individual pupils needs with support from Health & Safety colleagues.

A Member raised concerns regarding the mixed messages announced by the Welsh Government regarding a January lockdown. He noted that Officers were working towards the

	<p>4th January start date, however, was the Directorate also considering extending blended learning should a lockdown be announced in January along with the testing of pupils in schools and the safeguards that needed to be put in place. The Director of Education said they were awaiting further definitive guidance from the Welsh Government regarding expectations for provision from 4th January onwards. However, Blaenau Gwent was geared up to blended learning and work had been carried out to ensure that learners had the IT capability to be able to learn from home settings, particularly those disadvantaged learners. He felt that blended learning, for at least the spring term and possibly beyond could become the new norm and reiterated that Blaenau Gwent was well placed to continue with blended and remote learning moving forward into the Spring term.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>WELSH-MEDIUM EDUCATION CONSULTATION PROPOSAL</u> <u>CYNNIG YMGYNGHORI AR ADDYSG CYFRWNG CYMRAEG</u></p> <p>The Chair and Councillors J.C. Morgan, and T. Smith declared an interest in the following item and upon advice from the Monitoring Officer remained in the meeting. Therefore, the Vice-Chair, Councillor J. Holt took the Chair for this item only.</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to seek the views of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee, in relation to the proposal to consult upon the creation of a new 210 places Welsh-medium primary school in the Tredegar/Sirhowy valley.</p> <p>The Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein. The Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee would be statutory consultees upon the proposal.</p> <p>In response to a Member’s question regarding the £6.2m allocated by the Welsh Government, the Director of Education said the allocation had been made on an ‘in principle’ basis and earmarked for this initiative. There had been recent dialogue with the Welsh Government indicating</p>	

that this allocation was still available for use within Blaenau Gwent, subject to the consultation. The Member had concerns that if the consultation goes against the proposal the Welsh Government would look to have the £6.2m back. The Director said a lot of work had been undertaken by the Education Transformation team to access the capital funding, and that clearly it was a priority within the WESP to increase the numbers of Welsh learners to meet statutory obligations. There was a now a need to formally seek stakeholder views as part of the consultation process before formally taking the proposal forward.

A Member enquired if the school was to be built in phases as only 48 places would initially be used leading up to the 210 places over the next six years. The Director said that, subject to approval of the proposal, Technical Services had indicated that from a capital cost perspective it would be better to have one contract for construction of the school, and then subsequently open aspects of the school as learner capacity increased.

The Education Transformation Manager said there were opportunities for phasing that would be looked at, and subject to the outcome of the statutory processes, a detailed analysis around the costs and benefits associated with the phasing and the development of the proposal would be considered.

With regard to the site investigation work already carried out, a Member enquired regarding the budget for those works. The Director explained those costs had been charged against the Education Capital programme and were minimal costs i.e. mining investigations and desktop studies that would be charged back to the capital cost associated with the initiative.

A Member commented that he supported the consultation going forward and only when the facts were put before Members could a decision be reached regarding this proposal.

Another Member said he supported the consultation and hoped it would be Blaenau Gwent wide with every school, and staff and parents involved. He said that capital resources to build the school was one thing, but he had

concerns with revenue costs and the effect on the ISB budget.

Another Member also supported the consultation to obtain views of the wider community as the proposed site would affect some communities more than others. He made the point that the consultation had already been reported in the South Wales Argus which raised some concerns.

The Director confirmed the consultation would be county borough wide with an opportunity for local communities' comments to be fed into the consultation and would also include views of neighbouring authorities as Welsh-medium provision was provided on a regional basis. He reassured the Member, that the formal consultation, if approved, would not start until the 17th December, 2020. The article in the press would have been in relation the report that was on the agenda for today.

A Member referred to consultation and enquired if School Governors would be included. The Director said that consultation with School Governors was a key part of any statutory consultation process linked to school organisation and virtual consultation meetings could be held during the consultation period. The Education Transformation Manager confirmed that as stipulated in the consultation document any requests for virtual engagement sessions could be arranged.

In relation to the 20 day school consultation period, a Member enquired if this would be extended if schools were in lockdown in January. The Director said that it was anticipated that Welsh Government would be clear that schools would be officially open in January, even if they were working around remote and blended learning. Consultation would be different this time due to the COVID-19 situation, face to face meetings may be convened if it was safe to do so, however, it was anticipated that January would be a difficult time in terms of the amount of prevalent cases of COVID-19 and most meetings would take place virtually.

Having declared an interest in this item as a School Governor, the Member said that if there was consultation with School Governors then there should be consultation

	<p>with school staff and Headteachers within the Borough and the Tredegar area. He enquired where Members would stand in the consultation moving forward being a Scrutiny Member on the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee and also being a School Governor. The Director said that from prior consultation exercises Members who had been on Scrutiny Committees and been on Governing Bodies and had been engaged and offered their views and opinions around the proposal. Members had checked this with the Monitoring Officer prior to the meeting and he advised that this would not exclude Members from offering views as Governors and as representatives on the Scrutiny Committee in terms of the overall proposal.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report, associated document and course of action be accepted.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>BLAENAU GWENT WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2019/20 AND WELSH MEDIUM GRANT PROPOSAL PROGRESS REPORT</u> <u>CYNLLUN STRATEGOL CYMRAEG MEWN ADDYSG 2019/20 BLAENAU GWENT AC ADRODDIAD CYNNYDD AR Y CYNNIG GRANT CYFRWNG CYMRAEG</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise progress in relation to the Blaenau Gwent Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2017-2020 and the associated Welsh medium grant proposal.</p> <p>The Education Transformation Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member referred to forecasting growth and enquired if there was increased demand for Welsh places. The Education Transformation Manager said that it was difficult to forecast growth in relation to Welsh medium education, consideration was given to the catchment areas and projections in relation to trend and birth data, there were also in year transfers. The Directorate were looking to work more closely with the Early Years sector around growth and</p>	

	<p>transition. She also noted that accessibility, e.g. transport was still a key issue in Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding budget implications. The Education Transformation Manager said there was no direct financial implications associated with the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, however, the Welsh-medium proposal for the development of a new 210 place primary school, which was subject to statutory process and to political approval, could mean there may be some revenue implications associated with the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan of which the proposal was a part.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1, namely that the report and associated course of action be accepted.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>IMPROVING SCHOOLS PROGRAMME 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with an overview of those schools over the last 3 years that have presented as a cause for concern, their progress and the work delivered or currently underway to continue to support improvement.</p> <p>The Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein. He said Members would be aware that there had been changes and a relaxation of performance arrangements linked to COVID-19, but the report was being put forward so Members had the opportunity to scrutinise developments.</p> <p>A Member raised concerns that two secondary schools seemed to show no improvement in performance year on year and without categorisation Members were relying on quarterly reports to indicate current performance. He raised further concerns regarding the two all through schools within Blaenau Gwent which had a financial deficit and enquired what the deficit was for that school and what plans were in place to reduce the deficit. The Director of Education said that Abertillery Learning Community had been a cause for concern for a period of time, however, he was cautiously optimistic for the future of the school. He felt that the leadership arrangements, from a professional and</p>	

Governing Body perspective, had been strengthened over the last 12-18 months and felt confident moving forward. With regard to the financial position across the school estate, at the end of the financial year 2019/20 overall, schools across Blaenau Gwent were in a favourable position, however, all through schools were in deficit. The projected deficit for ALC was in excess of £1m but the actual amount was in the region of £600,000. A savings target of £175,000 had been set linked to their budget reduction deficit plan. The school had indicated that the savings target could be met, a Corporate Group had been re-established, led by the Managing Director of the Council, to closely monitor the financial sustainability and the educational standards of the ALC moving forward. He reassured Members that plans were in place to keep the school under close scrutiny in terms of their financial planning arrangements. He advised Members that over the next two years they would be looking to undertake a review of the ISB and the funding formula. That review would be taken forward and ultimately reported back to scrutiny as some of the proposals were taken forward.

A Member requested that future reports include information on school budgets that may be areas of concern.

The Committee AGREED this course of action.

Councillor M. Cook left the meeting at this juncture.

In response to a Member's question regarding the deficit of the all through schools and if the performance of junior and primary schools in the area were also a cause for concern, the Director of Education said that in relation to the deficit there were financial deficit projections before the Abertillery Learning Community was established based upon the former comprehensive school in Abertillery. Pupil population had been declining which had an impact upon the overall revenue position and sustainability of the comprehensive. Abertillery Learning Community now had the full complement of learners and this had contributed to reducing the financial deficit and the sustainability of Abertillery Learning Community moving forward. He advised Members that ALC had taken a report through their Governing Body around the Leadership Review, and he felt that this would provide a strong and effective structure to

take both the secondary and primary phases forward. He assured Members that progress was being monitored and had greater confidence that the school was progressing in line with expectations.

The Principal Challenge Advisor said a review had been carried out at the school that included pupil books, there had been variations across each of the primary campuses, they had all been at different points when the school amalgamated. There was now a consistency of standard and progress across all of the primary campuses and she felt that there had been a cultural shift as an all through school. Leaders at all levels were working together to strengthen the quality, standards and provision for the benefit of learners in the school.

A Member commented that it was pleasing to note that schools were improving and doing their best for pupils and enquired regarding staffing levels. The Director of Education said that Phase 1 of the restructuring proposals had been to secure the right senior leadership and management within the Learning Community and Phase 2 would be looking at teaching and learning assistants.

The Chair enquired regarding progress on the remodelling works at Brynmawr Foundation School and if this was affecting teaching and learning at the school. The Director of Education said secondary school remodelling was a key part of the Band B priorities. The Education Transformation Manager said that in relation to the likely timelines for investment at the school, they had been working with the school to develop a business case which would be put forward early next year, followed by a detailed project brief and design work with a view to commencing works on site some time in 2023. This was a significant project and was likely to span both Band A and Band B programmes, with the aim to improve teaching and learning and associated outcomes for pupils by ensuring that the learning environment actively facilitates these improvements. The Director of Education advised that the potential investment from the Band B Programme and Welsh medium capital grant would generate an investment of £25m in the school estate, however, there was a need for further investment so it was likely that secondary school remodelling would go into

	<p>the Band C programme past 2025 as an ongoing programme for secondary schools.</p> <p>With regard to schools in deficit, the Chair enquired where the deficits were funded from. The Director of Education explained that the ISB was seen as one overall resource, reports were presented to CLT on an annual basis which highlighted deficits and surpluses across the overall school estate. At this point in time, the school estate was in a surplus position in excess of £1m. Schools were managing within the overall ISB without pressures being created on other corporate budgets.</p> <p>A Member commented that school budget deficits should be presented to the Scrutiny Committee so Members could be kept fully informed. The Director of Education said that a report could be prepared to give Members an overview of the financial performance across the school estate without identifying individual schools.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1, namely that to contribute to the continuous assessment of effectiveness a report on school budgets that may be areas of concern be prepared and presented to a future meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>MANAGEMENT OF PUPIL PLACES AND THE SCHOOL ESTATE 2019/2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Education Transformation Manager which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the management of pupil places and the school estate, throughout the 2019/2020 academic session.</p> <p>The Education Transformation Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding the surplus places at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg and the drop in figures for Welsh education in primary schools and enquired if this information would be included in the consultation document. He commented that Pen-y-cwm school did not have</p>	

sufficient class rooms for the number of pupils yet there were surplus places at other primary schools. The Education Transformation Manager said the consultation document captured the context associated with pupil numbers and trends for Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg. It had been the only Welsh medium primary school at that time and the Local Authority was responsible for promoting demand and growth. Initially, there had been issues around standards highlighted in the Estyn Inspection but the school has significantly improved and pupil numbers had increased and were growing year on year in both nursery and reception classes. Work was also being undertaken with the Early Years sector to increase the provision of Welsh medium childcare options with a view to elicit further demand for uptake especially at nursery and reception age group. It had been a significant improvement journey and the Authority were mindful about how to manage the surplus places within Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg to ensure sufficiency in the medium to long term, in line with the potential for increased demand.

In relation to Ebbw Fawr, a review of capacity of Pen-y-Cwm school had been undertaken but as pupil numbers had increased significantly and the school had to rework its operations, a further full scale review with the school needed to be undertaken to look at reconfiguring the learning environment and additional capacity they may need in line with potential projections. A consultation document with a draft design and schedule of accommodation had been developed to address the needs of Pen-y-Cwm school in the short to medium term, the long term developments would include the potential use of aspects of Ebbw Fawr primary facility. Negotiations were taking place and the team were looking to bring forward proposals to increase capacity and therefore the space within Pen-y-Cwm school in early in 2021.

A Member commented that a number of schools had been oversubscribed year on year, some were due to a significant influx of pupils from new residential developments in the catchment area and enquired if this was being addressed and were significant increases in pupil projections taken into account in the design of new schools. The Education Transformation Manager explained how projections were undertaken, there was an established formula and the team

worked closely with the Planning Department to factor in housing developments, etc.

The sets of projections were:-

- Developments which were yet to be approved (including a look at Section 106 developer contributions to accommodate increased capacity).
- Developments that had been approved (including a look to secure Section 106 developer contributions to support increased capacity).
- Birth and trend data.

With regard to the Glyncod Primary design and schedule of accommodation the team had worked closely with the Planning Department and at this point in time there was capacity to accommodate potential future increased demand. Strategic planning was also undertaken and reviewed regularly to assess any potential impact to ensure that pupil numbers can be accommodated going forward.

The Member commented that Section 106 had been used to great advantage at Georgetown school for new play equipment within the school yard and also in the local playground and he hoped the use of Section 106 would continue.

The Education Transformation Manager informed Members that they were looking to undertake a catchment area review and were working closely with the Policy & Performance Team looking at data to consider how to review the catchment areas and were hoping to bring forward a statutory consultation in the summer term around the review of school catchment areas.

In answer to a Member's question regarding Section 106 and how it can be used. The Education Transformation Manager explained that an assessment form was completed every time a planning development came forward and using the established formula based on the number of dwellings and the potential impact of pupil numbers that would be generated for both primary and secondary schools, the form was submitted to the Planning Department in consideration of the potential impact upon schools. In some instances there were high levels of impact and other instances of little or no impact, this was monitored

throughout the school estate. Monthly meetings were held with the Planning Department to look at developments and the impact upon schools and look to address where there were financial viability issues for developers and also whether or not there was sufficient capacity within schools to accommodate the pupils. The Officer suggested that she could provide a report for a future meeting to provide detail on how the Directorate worked around Section 106 developments to incorporate them into pupil place planning and within strategic schools organisation processes.

A Member commented that he welcomed the review of the catchment areas as he felt it would help alleviate issues with sufficiency issues in some schools and help to reassess the pupil numbers that were required in different schools.

In relation to Section 106 a Member raised concerns around new developers and their contributions. He felt it was important to ensure that all developers contribute fairly and that Section 106 agreements continued.

The Director of Education referred to the Forward Work Programme and reports on the review of capacity at Pen-y-Cwm Special School and Section 106 Agreements would be presented to a Special meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report be accepted.

No. 9

EDUCATION ICT - INFRASTRUCTURE CONNECTIVITY PROJECT

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise progress in relation to the ICT - Infrastructure Connectivity Project (ICP). In addition, the report would provide an overview of the Welsh Government's Hwb EdTech Programme and its alignment with the Blaenau Gwent ICP.

The Education Transformation Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

A Member commented that the use of technology had changed dramatically this year and enquired if this new infrastructure would be able to cope with changes to blended learning and if it would help with learning across schools in subjects in low demand e.g. languages, etc. so that pupils from other schools in the Borough could join in with those particular subjects. The Education Transformation Manager said that from a consistency and infrastructure perspective schools were in a better position with equitable standards across the school estate. Work with schools on replacement of end of life devices was ongoing. An ICT Strategy was being developed with schools and the Education Achievement Service, the Strategy would be drafted over the spring term for consultation and implementation from September 2021. The infrastructure as facilitated had improved opportunities for remote learning across the board.

The SRS representative supported the Officers comments and said that IT was constantly changing and Wi-Fi installed in classrooms 10 years ago was now out of date. The new technology would enable blended learning, remote learning and classroom based learning in the most secure way with monitoring and support by an SRS Education team. They were putting out a specific network to accommodate the use of iPads and Chromebooks, there was also guest access to enable guest speakers to come into schools, and a BYOD platform rolled within it, which schools were looking at ways they could make use of this within the classroom setting. IT was a big enabler, the same classroom device being the same device taken from home, this was seen to some degree with the devices put out as part of the Digitally Disadvantaged Programme (DDP).

He continued that with regard to enabling schools to intercommunicate and allowing learners from one school to join with learners from other schools there was evidence that the technology enables that to happen, however, SRS could not direct schools on how best to use the technology installed but they were working with Blaenau Gwent and other partners to incorporate some of this in to a wider strategy.

The Member felt that this would be a big advantage moving forward to have specific schools teaching certain subjects right across the board.

In response to a Member's question on the Data Centre, the Education Transformation Manager said that this linked into schools migrating from BG learning to schools EDU platform. The SRS representative said the Blaenavon Data Centre would move elsewhere but the services that were provided on the schools EDU platform would continue. There was a move to Cloud computing and they would be looking at what the hub could bring in for Blaenau Gwent and partners over the coming years. The Education Transformation Manager said that part of the migration aspect of the project was very much aligned to the Data Centre developments and they were working closely with the Corporate team to look at any potential implications.

The Member enquired if data was kept separately in each school or stored at the data centre in Blaenavon. The SRS representative said that the majority of the data was kept within the data centre in Blaenavon which followed data standards. There was very little data kept on site but there were on site servers that dealt with system functions. Documents, emails and SIMS were all kept at the data centre in Blaenavon.

A Member enquired if the service was compatible with other local authorities and Coleg Gwent. The Education Transformation Manager confirmed there was an alignment with SRS local authorities. The Hwb Edtech initiative sought to achieve a level of consistency across Wales to work more consistently, share practices and resources etc. and SRS facilitated that interconnection between their local authorities within the region which included Monmouthshire, Torfaen and Newport.

The Chair referred to the works being carried out at Pen-y-Cwm school and hoped that disruptions would be kept to a minimum. He commented on the great work that had been done with blended learning especially in the primary schools. Equipment had been given to the most vulnerable pupils and he enquired what support was given to their parents to help them set up their children to be able to access online learning. The Education Transformation

	<p>Manager said that schools were working very closely with those parents, St Joseph’s school had held an engagement session with parents demonstrating online learning. From an inclusion perspective support could also be provided by the Inclusion team should it be required.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report be accepted.</p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 26TH JANUARY 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>A Member requested information on Consultant fees for the Education portfolio. The Director of Education would provide a briefing note for Members information.</p> <p>The Chair said that after the briefing note had been provided a report on Consultant fees for the Education portfolio could be included in the next Committee cycle if needed.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 26th January, 2021 be approved.</p> <p>It was FURTHER AGREED that a Members Briefing Note on Consultant Fees be prepared and forwarded to Members; and a Special meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee be arranged when appropriate to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of capacity at Pen-y-Cwm Special School • S106 Agreements 	

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Action Sheet

Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee – 15th December 2020

Item	Action to be Taken	By Whom	Action Taken
	Letter of condolence to be sent to Mr Tim Baxter.	Democratic Team	Letter sent 16 th December 2020.
10	<u>Forward Work Programme</u> A report to be prepared on Consultants Fees over the last 2 years. A special meeting to be arranged when appropriate to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of Capacity at Penycwm School• S106 Agreements	Lynn Phillips Lynn Phillips / Claire Gardner	Report scheduled for 9 th February 2021 meeting. Special Meeting is being arranged for the end of March 2021.

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Agenda Item 6

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **9th February 2021**

Report Subject: **Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Act Readiness**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. J. Collins, Executive Member Education**

Report Submitted by: **Gavin Metheringham, Service Manager Inclusion**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
14.01.21	21.01.21	26.01.21			09.02.21	24.02.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to provide Scrutiny Committee with an update on the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018) and the progress the Education Directorate is making in readiness.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Over thirteen years ago, Welsh Government felt that there was a need to look at reforming the current Special Educational Needs (SEN) system. Preliminary consultations took place in 2007 on the assessment and statementing system and this led to a series of reform pilots from 2009-12.
- 2.2 Over the course of the following five years, further trials and pilots took place and Blaenau Gwent participated in this work, leading on the development of Person Centred Practice (PCP) in all schools across South East Wales. This resulted in our schools receiving training and beginning to work on a PCP approach, sharing their practice locally and regionally.
- 2.3 In December 2017, the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018) was passed by Welsh Government. The aim of the ALN Act is to create a unified process for children and young people 0-25 that will improve outcomes with a single statutory framework.
- 2.4 The ALN Act creates the legislative framework to improve the planning and delivery of additional learning provision, through a person-centred approach to identifying learner needs earlier, putting in place effective support and monitoring, and adapting interventions, ensuring the desired outcomes.
- 2.5 The ALN Act will be supported by a new ALN Code of Practice but there have been delays in its development and finalisation. Welsh Government has committed to the Code of Practice being laid before the Senedd in March 2021, in time to be in place in September 2021.

- 2.6 It is worth pointing out that until September 2021, the Council is required to comply with the duties placed upon us under the current SEN Code of Practice and then from 2021-2024 there will be two systems in place as the service transitions from one to the other.
- 2.7 From September 2021, all Councils have a responsibility to ensure that the requirements of the ALN Act and accompanying Code are in place to support learners aged 0-25 and that they work effectively with other agencies such as Health to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people.
- 2.8 The ALN Act and draft Code make clear that each area of a child's need cannot be seen in isolation and a holistic approach is required where all of a child's needs are met, accompanied by a single unified plan - the individual development plan (IDP). Therefore, planning to meet children's education, health and social care needs have to be considered as a whole with agencies planning together.
- 2.9 IDPs will replace statements of special educational needs (SEN) and individual education plans (IEPs) for learners currently supported through Early Years Action/School Action or Early Years Action Plus/School Action Plus. Where required, a school will decide whether the child or young person has additional learning needs (ALN) and, if so, put an IDP in place. Schools can refer such decisions to the local authority if:
- determining the extent and nature of the young person's ALN, or the additional learning provision (ALP) that they require, is beyond the school's capability; and/or,
 - it would not be reasonable for the school itself to secure the required provision.
- 2.10 The ALN Code will also impose mandatory requirements on the governing body of maintained schools in Wales in respect of decisions about ALN, the preparation, content, form, review and revision of IDPs, and ceasing to maintain IDPs. In relation to Children Looked After (CLA) and working with Children's Services, it will be essential that directorates work together to plan changes and transitions particularly where children have an ALN, and therefore, an IDP that would form part of the Personal Education Plan (PEP).
- 2.11 In relation to children who are Electively Home Educated (EHE) with an identified additional learning need, the current expectation is that the IDP must be maintained by the LA.

A Regional Approach

- 2.12 In preparation for September 2021, LAs across the South East Wales consortia region (SEWC) have been working together to ensure that there is a collaborative and coherent approach to the implementation of the ALN Act and associated guidance (ALN Code) through the use of a regional implementation plan.

- 2.13 The plan has four key areas of work (early years, schools, post 16 and communication/collaboration). Within collaboration, the role of the EAS is included due to the need to ensure ALN is also considered as part of the school improvement agenda.
- 2.14 The region has developed a cluster approach with the appointment of both regional and cluster ALNCos. The ALNCos have supported the completion of school readiness surveys which have been developed to support planning, delivery and self-evaluation at a school level, as well as the development and implementation of a training plan. Welsh Government has provided the region with funding to enable current ALNCos to undertake the accredited National Middle Leadership qualification, in collaboration with the EAS.
- 2.15 The benefit of regional working has been significant and below are a few of the many ways in which Blaenau Gwent has benefited from, and contributed to a regional approach.
- Modular training for Early Years (EY) providers established by EYs leads;
 - PCP approaches embedded across the region (piloted originally by Blaenau Gwent);
 - The development of a school readiness survey with the sharing of good practice;
 - The development of a health readiness survey for Health teams;
 - Professional learning offer developed for ALNCos;
 - Post-16 training offer developed for post-16 staff including Coleg Gwent;
 - Enhanced transition programme developed and being trialled in each LA;
 - An online 'Matrix' being trialled by each LA to support Removing Barriers to Learning;
 - Special Schools working together to support the roll out of IDPs; and,
 - Parental engagement sessions in each LA run by SNAP Cymru.

All these areas have benefited from the support of the ALN Transformation Lead funded by Welsh Government.

A Local Approach

- 2.16 The ALN Act required from January 2021 the introduction of a new statutory post in each LA – that of an Early Years ALN Lead Officer. This post was appointed to in December and sits within the ALN Service, based in Pen-y-Cwm Special School. A local steering group is in place which is cross-Directorate to ensure that the requirements of the Act are fulfilled.
- 2.17 A Strategic Headteachers group planned as part of the regional approach will now be carried out locally and the Service Manager – Inclusion is in the process of formulating this group. This group will be key over the next two terms in supporting schools in their preparations. In addition, the EAS, as a regional partner, are also making ready for September 2021.
- 2.18 SNAP Cymru continue to provide local engagement sessions and raise awareness with parents. Welsh Government are finalising online training that will be rolled out across Wales. The training will be multi-level and designed

to ensure the appropriate level of knowledge is available for those who require it. The SEN team will be complementing this with a range of short 'bite-size' sessions/briefings to provide further support in this area.

- 2.19 Blaenau Gwent's local ALNCo Forum, held half-termly provides our key point of contact for all our ALNCoS and Education Officers to share good practice and support the development of the processes needed in schools from September 2021. These discussions are coordinated by the Educational Psychology Service but led by one of our Regional ALNCoS.
- 2.20 Blaenau Gwent has expanded the ALN team in preparation for September 2021. Welsh Government has provided some additional funding in the short term which has been used to create a fixed term post of ALN Officer.
- 2.21 COVID-19 – Welsh Government took the decision not to suspend statutory SEN processes during COVID. The requirements for statutory assessments to be carried out have continued with the right of parental appeal to the SEN Tribunal. This has not been easy to manage when schools have been closed and with remote learning now taking place. COVID-19 has also impacted upon the preparation work for the ALN Act. However, with the regional and local approach in place, the Inclusion team are confident that all that needs to be in place for September 2021 will be.

Options for Recommendation

- 3.1 The options for Scrutiny Committee to consider are:
 1. Members accept the report and agree that Blaenau Gwent will be ALN ready for September 2021 when the ALN Act becomes operational and appropriate preparations are taking place; and/or.
 2. Members consider the report and provide feedback/comments to ensure appropriate preparations are taking place.

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

The ALN Act and preparations for it support Priority 1 for Education: to improve pupil outcomes, progress and wellbeing, for all our pupils, particularly for our vulnerable learners. It will also contribute to priority 3 regarding supporting school leaders to help our pupils achieve their ambitions. The ALN Act and the preparations for it further support our strategic responsibilities with regard to progressing our Vision for Education (school led, self-improving system based on effective school to school collaboration), as well as supporting the securing of effective, efficient and economical high quality provision for our vulnerable learners.

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)

The impact on budget from September 2021 is not fully known. The original expectation of Welsh Government was that the reforms would bring about a revenue saving. Welsh Government later revised this and now consider the

impact as cost neutral. This is not the general view of Education services across Wales. Increasing the age range, extending (or deepening) the statutory right of Tribunal appeal and increasing the number of pupils potentially entitled to a statutory IDP points to a likely cost impact, upon schools (in managing the increased number of plans), on the Council (in managing a potential increase in the number of LA plans), in Tribunal directions and decisions (impacting upon required provision). In addition, the requirement for a statutory Early Years ALN Lead Officer has a budget implication leading to a cost pressure of £70,000.

5.2 Risk including Mitigating Actions

Funding commitments from Welsh Government has enabled the release of staff to support preparations. A continuation of the current progress will ensure that the implementation plan stays on track with appropriate monitoring at a local and regional level.

5.3 Legal

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

5.4 Human Resources

The requirement placed on the Council to introduce a new strategic post of Early Years ALN Lead Officer from January 2021 has been completed. There will be further consideration of pressures once the finalised ALN Code is released and there is clarification provided in a number of other areas such as Elective Home Education and CLA.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 Performance Information and Data

The last Pupil Census information on SEN showed that in 2019/20 Blaenau Gwent had 1795 pupils on the SEN register of which 246 had Statements of SEN. Whilst not all 1795 pupils would be entitled to an IDP, it is clear that the number will be higher than the 246 that currently have statutory and legally challengeable statements.

6.2 Expected outcome for the public

The Council is working to ensure that the ALN Act is implemented in an efficient and effective manner, in line with regional and national good practice and in partnership with schools and other services/agencies, will provide a level of reassurance to the public. In addition, the introduction of the ALN Act will ensure that the processes related to pupils with ALN will be much more pupil focused, less bureaucratic and more responsive.

6.3 Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)

Significant consultation has been undertaken by Welsh Government in the development of the ALN Act. At a local and regional level, SNAP Cymru has undertaken parental engagement sessions and previous Headteacher meetings and ALNCo Forums have continued to keep the reform on the agenda. In addition, significant work has taken place with Health, and Social

Services have been provided with initial awareness raising sessions. This will be ongoing.

6.4 Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)

Appropriate attention is required to ensuring the smooth transformation and implementation of the ALN Act. Once in force and subsequent to that, there is an expectation that the processes will have a positive impact on our learners with ALN, their families, schools and other partners.

6.5 Preventative focus

Ensuring that the ALN Act is implemented in an efficient and effective manner, in line with regional and national good practice and in partnership with schools and other services/agencies, will ensure an improved system that works for the benefit of pupils, families and the wider community.

6.6 Collaboration / partnership working

The Inclusion team are working closely with the region, with Councils across Wales and with Welsh Government as well as with Health and Social Services. Where alignment and further collaboration is possible as a result of the introduction of the ALN Act these will be pursued. Closer working can only bring benefit to our ALN learners, of all ages.

6.7 Integration (across service areas)

The ALN Act complements other areas of work such as the broader wellbeing work and the work of the EAS. In addition, the introduction of IDPs, particularly given the age range and the introduction of the Early Years ALN Lead Officer post will benefit a holistic approach to meeting children and young people's needs.

6.8 EqIA

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 The work towards implementation of the ALN Act is monitored at multiple levels. Estyn has carried out a thematic review on the readiness of Councils, as well as having discussions with the Education Directorate via LA link inspector (LALI) meetings and with individual schools. Welsh Government also monitors via regional and themed reporting requirements.

Agenda Item 7

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A
Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **Tuesday 9th February 2021**

Report Subject: **21st Century Schools Band B Progress**

Portfolio Holder: **Education and Learning Portfolio – Cllr. J. Collins**

Report Submitted by: **Claire Gardner, Education Transformation Manager**

Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
14.1.21	21.1.21	26.01.21			09.2.21	24.02.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to scrutinise progress in line with the delivery of the Band B Programme.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The 21st Century Schools Programme is a long-term strategic investment in the education estate throughout Wales. The Programme is broken down into phases of investment, categorised as Bands. The Band A Programme in Blaenau Gwent, successfully concluded in the autumn-term of 2019, with the delivery of the final project, Six Bells Campus.

- 2.2 The Band A Programme realised an investment of £20.25m in school estate between 2014-19 (50/50 WG and Council funded) as follows:

- **Tredegar Comprehensive School Remodelling Project £2.3m:**

The project concluded in 2017. A project closure/ evaluation workshop session with Construction Excellence Wales (CEW) deemed the project to be an example of best practice in terms of:

- value for money;
- partnership working;
- project management arrangements; and,
- effective delivery on a live site.

The project closure report has now been submitted to Welsh Government.

- **Abertillery Learning Community (Tillery Street Campus) New Build Primary School - £9.8m:** The new school was occupied by staff and pupils June 2016. Phase 4 of the project, which involved demolition of the former school and external works, concluded in November 2016. The Welsh Government Minister for Education officially opened the Tillery Street Campus in January 2017. The closure report has been finalised and submitted to Welsh Government.

- **Ystruth Primary School Remodelling Project - £635,900:** The focus of the project was to remodel key areas of the school to meet the changing needs of the pupil population. The project had a specific

focus on the transformation of provision for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The project commenced in October 2017 and concluded in August 2018 on programme and profile.

- **Abertillery Learning Community (Six Bells Campus) New Build Primary School - £8.8m (inclusive of an additional £150,000 of funding secured from Welsh Government in January 2019):** The project involved the development of a 360 place new build primary school along with a 60 place nursery and a 9 place resource base, to accommodate pupils from Queen Street and Bryngwyn Primary Campuses. Sewer diversion works concluded in July 2018, and the formal school build process commenced. Education was successful in securing an additional £150,000 to increase community parking on the site. This falls outside of the project and is planned for delivery between 2021 and 2022. The Minister for Education opened the Six Bells Campus in September 2019.

2.3 In July 2017, Welsh Government requested an ambitious Strategic Outline Programme (SOP). The Blaenau Gwent Band B SOP was later approved in 2018. Blaenau Gwent's submission aimed to address the following key priorities:

- I. Raising standards, particularly at KS4;
- II. Improving suitability and condition of the school estate;
- III. Programme deliverability-match-funding and affordability;
- IV. Sustainability and reducing revenue costs; and,
- V. Increasing Welsh medium learning opportunities.

2.4 The Blaenau Gwent Band B Programme investment objective are as follows:

- **Investment Objective 1:** to raise standards and achievement in line with localised targets at foundation phase, KS2, KS3 and KS4; and secure improved transition into post 16 learning.
- **Investment Objective 2:** to create a sustainable model for the 21st Century school estate in consideration of both capital and revenue investment, along with the condition and suitability of buildings.
- **Investment Objective 3:** to establish effective management and provision of school places, by having the right schools in the right place at the right time.
- **Investment Objective 4:** to implement the 21st Century Schools Programme in line with local, regional and national school organisation policy; ensuring synergy between progression, development and implementation.
- **Investment Objective 5:** meeting the needs of vulnerable learners.

2.5 Blaenau Gwent 21st Century Schools Programme has an established programme management structure, delivered in line with the Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) methodology. The Programme Board who oversee it, is comprised of key Council Officers, along with external partners, and is accountable to Corporate Leadership Team, who act as Programme Sponsor. Projects are managed in accordance with Blaenau Gwent's Corporate Project Management Framework and PRINCE 2, and each has a dedicated project management team.

2.6 Welsh Government encourages and expects Councils to participate in a Gateway Review process. The Gateway Review is a form of peer review, which tests the Council's readiness and capacity to successfully deliver projects and programmes. 4 reviews have taken place to date within Blaenau Gwent, with the latest having taken place in 2019.

2.7 The Education Transformation Team agreed with the review team that, due to the programme status, the delivery confidence assessment should be split as follows, one for Band A and one for Band B respectively. For Band A, based upon a Gateway 5, the review team considered that the delivery confidence assessment as Green. For Band B, based upon a Gateway 0, the review team considered that the delivery confidence assessment as Amber, due to early stage of the programme. The outcome report (Please refer to **Appendix 1**), highlighted that the 21st Century Schools programme management arrangements are to be commended, as follows:

'...all of the projects within the Portfolio have been successfully completed... 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 very high quality of programme management in evidence is impressive.'

2.8 An internal audit of the 21st Century Schools Band A Programme was undertaken during the 2019/20 academic year, the outcome of which was a grading of 'reasonable assurance'. Only 2 weaknesses were found which pre-date the existing programme team. The weaknesses found were pertaining to the Band A SOP (submitted in 2010), along with business case submissions pre-2014. Both of these weaknesses have subsequently been addressed by the current Programme team (for more information please refer to **Appendices 2 (a), (b) and (c)** containing the audit reports)

2.9 The Band B Programme commenced in April 2019 and is set to conclude in 2025. The Programme will realise an investment of £19.6million throughout the Blaenau Gwent school estate. The Welsh Government intervention rate for Band B is a 65/35 split, in favour of Local Authorities. The Band B Programme seeks to deliver the following key projects in line with the investment objectives:

- Continued secondary school re-modelling within the following priority schools:
 - Abertillery Learning Community Secondary Campus
 - Brynmawr Foundation School
 - River Centre Learning Community
 - Tredegar Comprehensive School

This project will be a continued focus due to the level of investment required, in line with future bandings of the 21st Century Schools Programme – **Business case submission is programmed throughout 2021.**

- The development of a new 360 primary school to replace Glyncoed Primary, which is the only category 'D' building in terms of condition

within county borough – **All business cases have been submitted and approved by Welsh Government**

- Primary School remodelling within the Ebbw Fawr Valley consisting of Beaufort Hill, Cwm and Rhos y Fedwen Primary Schools – **All business cases have been submitted and approved by Welsh Government.**
- Remodelling of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg to address ongoing condition and suitability issues – **The business case for which has been submitted and approved by Welsh Government.**

2.10 The Cabinet Secretary for Finance announced on 16th January 2018 that £30 million (100% funding, with no match requirement from Councils), would be allocated to support capital projects dedicated to and growing Welsh language in education (the grant was to be administered in addition to the capital allocations confirmed in Band B).

2.11 In addition to the Band B funding envelope, Blaenau Gwent Council received confirmation in October 2018, that they were successful in securing £6 million from the Welsh-medium capital grant, along with £200,000 from the Capital Childcare Grant. The grants were awarded in line with the proposal to create a new 210 place Welsh-medium primary school and associated childcare facility in the Tredegar/ Sirhowy valley. This proposal is currently subject to statutory consultation, which is scheduled to conclude on the 29th January 2021.

2.12 The delivery programme/timeline has and continues to be subject to regular review throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic. The financial profile has also undergone review in discussion with Welsh Government, with the latest profile submitted in December 2020 (Please refer to **Appendix 3(a)** for the delivery programme/timeline and **Appendix 3(b)** for the financial profile).

3. **Options for Recommendation**

Option 1: Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considers and accepts the report.

Option 2: Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considers the report and provides comments relating to improvements that can be made prior to reporting to the Executive Committee.

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

4.1 There is a statutory requirement upon the Council to deliver the Band B Programme in line with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code (2018). Each project requires approval via the Welsh Government Business Case Scrutiny Group and Capital Panel. The Business Case documentation has to be developed in accordance with the HM Treasury Green Book, Five Case Model.

4.2 Education is a strategic priority within the Council's Corporate Plan and the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan, of which 21st Century Schools is an

essential component in securing: improved access to education, education facilities (including condition and suitability), provision and standards throughout the school estate. The 21st Century Schools Programme also features as a priority in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), and consequently, has generated a high-level of support from the capital programme.

5.1 **Impact on Budget** - There are no new or additional budgetary implications for the Council. The financial profile was last reviewed and submitted to Welsh Government in December 2020 (see **Appendix 3 (b)** for the financial matrix). The total programme cost currently stands at £19.6million, with the Council's 35% contribution being £6.86million which has been secured and approved via the Council's Capital Programme. In addition, the Welsh Medium Project which has received 100% funding from Welsh Government is currently estimated to be £7.5million, which has been reflected in the attached matrix. Discussions have taken place with Welsh Government, who recognise the likely cost increase as a result of both COVID-19 and delayed implementation. More detailed cost reviews are currently underway with Education, Finance, Technical Officers (i.e. Quantity Surveyors) and Welsh Government, who are currently collating the national cost implications and uplift, with a view to identifying grant funding to address this. The programme is currently on profile, with regular reviews taking place with all relevant representatives on a monthly basis.

5.2 **Risk** – 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 robust risk management arrangements in place for the 21st Century Schools Programme, with identified risks regularly monitored reported and escalated via the 21st Century Schools Programme Board.

The high-level risks associated with programme delivery at present, include: the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic along with financial, resourcing and programming implications. Project Groups have been established for all live projects monitoring development, delivery and associated requirements. The Programme Board is monitoring programme delivery, with the core Project team (Education, Finance and Community Services) monitoring and reviewing programme resources, progress, timelines and financial profiles on a monthly basis. 2 business cases have been approved to date, with the remainder on track for submission as programmed. Monthly meetings are taking place with Welsh Government, to consider the financial profile and delivery programme in line with the pandemic, along with Welsh Govt. grant and wider support.

5.3 **Legal** – There are no direct legal implications associated with this report, other than the requirement for the Local Authority to follow the statutory processes set out within the Welsh Government School Organisation Code. Education is supported by the Council's Legal section, along with Clarks Legal as required, in fulfilling the obligations associated with regulated activity.

5.4 **Human Resources** – There are no direct human resource implications associated with the report, staffing and other resources have been secured in line with programme delivery, and contingencies built-in. Resourcing is subject to regular review at both a programme and project level, with transition plans established to oversee school organisation priorities (including HR).

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

To date the following outcomes have been achieved:

- All 4 projects have been delivered, securing successful conclusion of the Band A Programme, on programme and profile.
- The Band A programme has been subject to internal review and evaluation, internal audit, along with 4 external Gateway Reviews. The latter demonstrates excellent progress and strong programme/ project management arrangements are in place. Learning from the Band B Programme has been used to inform Band B development and implementation.
- Welsh Government have approved all Business Case submissions to date in line with delivery of the Band B Programme.
- Band B projects are currently on profile and programme.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public (This section is mandatory)** - The 21st Century Schools Programme will contribute to raising the standard of education throughout the school estate.

6.3 **Involvement** - The 21st Century Schools Programme contributes heavily to the strategic direction for the school estate across the County Borough. The 21st Century Schools Programme Board has representation from across all services within the Council. There are also statutory requirements to involve stakeholders in school organisation proposals linked to the WG's School Organisation Code (2018).

6.4 **Thinking for the Long term** - The 21st Century Schools Programme is a long-term investment programme that at present, 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 in line with the needs of school staff and learners', placing an emphasis on delivering a school estate that is fit for purpose and 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. The 21st Century Schools Programme plays a fundamental part in improving partnership arrangements with the schools and their respective communities e.g. the community focussed school's agenda. In addition, the programme itself is delivered via a team officers from across all Council directorates, along with external partners such as the Shared Resource Service Wales.

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** – There is no adverse impact upon the protected characteristics.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Gateway Review Report

Appendices 2 (a), (b) and (c) – Audit Reports

Appendix 3 (a) and (b) – Programme/timeline and Financial Profile

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

Version number:	FINAL 1.0
Senior Responsible Owner (SRO):	Lynn Phillips
Date of issue to SRO:	25 th September 2019 Final Version 1 st October 2019
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

This assurance review was arranged and managed by:

Welsh Government Integrated Assurance Hub (IAH)
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Cardiff
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IAH helpdesk: ppmdevelopmentunit@gov.wales



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>	

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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.

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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.

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, Glyngoed, 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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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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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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- 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.

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

SYSTEMS AUDIT – 21st CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

1. INTRODUCTION/OBJECTIVES

- 1.1. The objective of the Audit was to conduct a review of the systems in place, report upon the soundness and adequacy of the internal controls, and ensure compliance with any relevant statutory requirements and regulations in line with the Audit Plan for 2019/20.
- 1.2. This report includes an Audit Opinion and a Risk Rating Category, further details of which are contained in Appendix A.

2. SCOPE OF THE AUDIT

- 2.1. The scope of the audit was to determine the effectiveness of the internal control procedures within the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the Authority's 21st Century Schools Programme and the Projects contained therein.
- 2.2. The audit involved confirming the current system with relevant staff and conducting 'walk through tests' on the processes carried out within the service.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The 21st Century Schools programme is a long term strategic investment in Wales' educational estate. It is a collaboration between Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), local authorities, colleges and dioceses. It included a £1.4 billion investment in education throughout all 22 Local Authority areas in Wales, resulting in the rebuild and refurbishment of over 150 schools and colleges, which have been prioritised by the delivery partners.
- 3.2. The delivery of the first investment phase (Band A) continued until March 2019 and focused on:
 - reduction of poor condition school buildings;
 - provision of the right number of places, in the right places to serve local pupil demand by reducing surplus capacity, and addressing specific Welsh-medium and Faith-based provision needs;
 - reduction of running costs so as to maximise resources available to target improvements to learner outcomes; and,
 - promoting sustainability through reducing recurrent costs, energy consumption and carbon emissions.
- 3.3. The delivery of the second investment phase (Band B) commenced in April 2019 and it focuses on:
 - addressing growth in demand for Welsh-medium education;
 - reducing surplus capacity and inefficiency in the system;
 - expansion of schools and colleges in areas of increased demand for educational services;
 - addressing condition of educational assets; and,
 - making assets available for community use where demand exists, to optimise the infrastructure and resources for public services.

- 3.4. The Council's Education Transformation Team delivers the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools and Education Capital Programme on behalf of the Authority. A number of Blaenau Gwent's key projects were commenced within Band A of the Programme, including:
- Tredegar Comprehensive School remodelling project;
 - Abertillery Primary School new build; and,
 - Six Bells Primary School new build.

4. AUDIT FINDINGS & WEAKNESSES

- 4.1. The findings and weaknesses below are in order of risk, with the first being the highest risk area.
- 4.2. In order to satisfy Welsh Government's (WG) application requirements in respect of the 21st Century Schools Programme a Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) is required providing an overview of the future education provision within the Borough and identifying projects for investment. A copy of the SOP compiled by the Authority was obtained during the audit and it was evident that it contained the information as required by WG, however it was not possible to determine the date that the SOP was submitted to WG, and therefore it was not possible to determine compliance with the applicable timescales.
- 4.3. As part of WG's application process for individual investment projects it was evident that business case documentation was required to be submitted, satisfying a number of criteria that were stipulated within published guidance. A sample of applications submitted by the Authority was selected during the audit, with the associated documentation assessed. It was evident that the business case documentation submitted by the Authority contained relevant cases to support the application; however, it was not evident that one of the documents obtained during the audit had been signed by senior management to certify approval prior to submission.

5. RISKS AND AGREED ACTIONS

Ref	Summary of Findings	Risk	Agreed Action	Client Management Comments	Person Responsible and Target Date
4.2.	It was not possible to determine the date that the SOP was submitted to WG, and therefore it was not possible to determine compliance with the applicable timescales.	Medium – Unable to verify that WG submission deadlines have been satisfied.	Evidence of submissions to WG will be retained and stored centrally where applicable.		Head of Education Transformation. Ongoing.
4.3.	It was not evident that the business case documentation obtained during the audit had been signed by senior management to certify approval prior to submission.	Medium – Lack of identification of senior accountable officer for submission. Lack of confirmation that the version submitted has been approved by senior management.	Evidence of submissions to WG will be retained and stored centrally where applicable.		Head of Education Transformation. Ongoing.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1. This audit report is compiled on an exception basis, thus the only points made are where weaknesses have been identified. The samples chosen would not be able to cover every transaction or eventuality; therefore reliance is placed in part on the information and explanations provided by the appropriate officers.

7. INTERNAL CONTROL STANDARD GRADING

- | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>7.1. In accordance with the standard gradings set out in Appendix A, systems examined indicate that the internal controls used within the 21st Century Schools Programme appear to be operating effectively. The grading is therefore assessed as ‘Reasonable Assurance’.</p> |
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INTERNAL AUDIT SUMMARY REPORT

SYSTEMS AUDIT – 21st CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This audit was carried out in line with the Internal Audit Plan 2019/20, and in full consultation with operational staff and management.
- 1.2. The scope of the audit was to determine the effectiveness of the internal controls within the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the Authority's 21st Century Schools Programme and the Projects contained therein.
- 1.3. The audit was conducted by the Senior Auditor and took the form of a series of detailed tests and checks, together with discussions with operational staff and managers.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1. Two weaknesses were identified, both of which were classified as Medium Risk. The weaknesses were:
 - It was not possible to determine the date that the Strategic Outline Programme was submitted to Welsh Government (WG), and therefore it was not possible to determine compliance with the applicable timescales.
Agreed action – Evidence of submissions to WG will be retained and stored centrally where applicable.
 - It was not evident that the business case documentation obtained during the audit had been signed by senior management to certify approval prior to submission.
Agreed action – Evidence of submissions to WG will be retained and stored centrally where applicable.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1. After reviewing all documentation and the current system, it was found that the internal controls used within the 21st Century Schools Programme appear to be operating effectively.
- 3.2. The Head of Education Transformation has agreed to mitigating actions for each of the weaknesses identified.

4. INTERNAL CONTROL STANDARD GRADING

- 4.1. In accordance with the standard gradings, the systems examined indicate that internal controls within the 21st Century Schools Programme appear to be operating effectively. The grading is therefore assessed as **'Reasonable Assurance'**.

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APPENDIX A

INTERNAL CONTROL CLASSIFICATION.

The Internal control classifications are as follows: -

<u>Category</u>	<u>Classification</u>
Full Assurance	Minimal or no risks identified with controls operating as expected or a few areas identified where changes would be beneficial.
Reasonable Assurance	Controls appear to be operating effectively however a few weaknesses have been identified that requires systems to be strengthened.
Limited Assurance	A significant weakness or a number of weaknesses have been identified within internal controls, resulting in an increased risk to the Authority.
No Assurance	Unacceptable risks identified; with fundamental improvements required.

RISK RATING CATEGORIES.

The Risk Rating classifications are as follows: -

<u>Category</u>	<u>Suggested Indicators</u>
High	Action that is considered significant and ensures the Authority and the service is not exposed to considerable risks.
Medium	Action that is considered necessary to avoid exposure to risks.
Low	Action that is less significant to the overall risks of the Authority but will result in enhanced control to the service.

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21st Century Schools and Education Programme - Band B Funding Forecast

Organisation Name:				2018/19 Funding		2019/20 Funding		2020/21 Funding		2021/22 Funding		2022/23 Funding		2023/24 Funding	
Project Name	Proposed Capacity	Education Level	Education Medium Type	Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support	Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support	Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support	Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support	Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support	Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support
Band B															
324755	Ysgol Bro Helyg	258	Primary	Welsh				71,840	28,160	278,160	605,590		16,250		
324751	Ebbw Fawr New Build/Primary School Redevelopment	971	Primary	English/Welsh					50,000	1,475,000	4,105,000	1,475,000	895,000	100,000	400,000
324752-4	Secondary School Remodelling	tbc	Secondary	English						70,000	130,000	280,000	520,000	1,330,000	2,470,000
Childcare Offer															
324772	Blaina ICC	tbc	Pre School	English			57,203		50,000		392,797				
324771	Glyncoed new setting	60	Pre School	English					50,000		1,450,000				
324770	Six Bells new setting	60	Pre School	English			8,777				1,491,233				
324774	Small Grant Scheme	tbc	Pre School	English											
324773	Swffryd Flying Start	tbc	Pre School	English			17,420		50,000		432,580				
	Welsh Medium Provision - Band B Seedling School & New Build WM	tbc	Pre School	Welsh							200,000				
Welsh Medium															
324750	Band B Seedling School & New Build WM	210	Primary	Welsh			10,000		100,000		590,000		5,300,000		1,500,000
				-	-	-	93,400	71,840	328,160	1,823,160	9,397,200	1,755,000	6,731,250	1,430,000	4,370,000

To be approved by Director of Finance or s151 Officer

I certify the forecast above is correct at the time of submission to the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme team, and there is full support in place for the Local Authority/Further Education Institution's element of funding.

I confirm the funding per project has been accurately profiled based on the information available at present and the Welsh Government grant element does not exceed the relevant grant rate (65/75/85%), unless otherwise approved by the Welsh Government.

Electronic Signature:



Name: Joanne Watts

Position: Principal Accountant

Date: 06/10/20

2024/25 Funding		2025/26 Funding		Total Funding			WG Grant %
Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support	Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support	Self Funded Element	Welsh Government Support	Total	
				350,000	650,000	1,000,000	0.65
100,000	400,000			3,150,000	5,850,000	9,000,000	0.65
1,330,000	2,470,000	350,000	650,000	3,360,000	6,240,000	9,600,000	0.65
				-	-	-	
					-	-	
					500,000	500,000	1
					1,500,000	1,500,000	1
					1,500,010	1,500,010	1
					-	-	
				-	500,000	500,000	1
				-	200,000	200,000	1
				-	-	-	
				-	-	-	
				-	7,500,000	7,500,000	1
1,430,000	2,870,000	350,000	650,000	6,860,000	24,440,010	#####	
				£0.22	78.08%		

21 st Century Schools Programme Band B (2019-25)	Timeline/ Milestones
New Welsh-medium Primary (Welsh Medium Grant)	<p>Business Case – Submitted and approved COVID19 Pandemic- (March-May Lockdown) unsure of impact, the team is continuing to develop documents in line with delivery and implementation, the below dates may alter slightly.</p> <p>Formal Consultation –Autumn 2020 Statutory Notice period - Spring Term 2021 Site Investigation – Autumn 2020/Spring 2021 Project Brief – Autumn 2020 Revised cost plan – Autumn 2020 Tender document preparation and detailed design –stage 1 Spring 2021 / 2 Summer 2021 (6 Months) Planning – Summer 2021 (6 months) Out to Tender – Autumn 2021 Contractor Appointment – Spring/Summer 2022 Commencement – Summer/ Autumn 2022 (14-month contract) Conclusion – Autumn 2023 Occupation – (subject to phased development /construction programme and timeline)</p>
	Band B – Bro Helyg Remodelling Project
Welsh-medium Remodelling Project (Band B)	<p>Ysgol Gymraeg Remodelling project: Business Justification Case: Submission to WG Date: 25th September 2019 (BCSG-9th October and CP 23rd October 2019) Revised Business Case Submission August 2020 (with additional condition and suitability information) . COVID19 Pandemic- (March-May Lockdown) unsure of impact, the team is continuing to develop documents in line with delivery, and implementation the below dates may alter slightly. Project brief: Spring 2020 Approval of Business Case: November 2020 Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: Autum 2020/Spring 2021 Out to tender: Autumn 2020/Spring 2021 (4-6 weeks) Contractor appointment: Autumn 2020/Spring 2021 Commencement (external works): Spring 2021 (6weeks) Commencement (internal works): Spring/Summer 2021 (16 weeks) Conclusion: October 2021</p>
	Band B – Band B Ebbw Fawr Valley Primary Redevelopment Projects
Ebbw Fawr New Build Glyncoed Primary School (EFNB) Remodelling Primary (RPM) (Band B)	<p>Business case: Outline Business Case for EFNB as well as RPM and OBC/SOC Strategic Outline Case combined: Submission WG Date: Scrutiny group 28th February 2020, Investment panel 15th April 2020 Revised Business Case Submission Addendum April 2020 - for 14th May Business Case and 18 June scrutiny panels. Approved Combined SOC/OBC: July 2020 FBC Full Business Case: Submission to WG Date: 31st October 2020, for November December considerations Project Brief: Autumn-term 2020 Glyncoed Site investigations: Commenced Spring 2020 ongoing Apporved FBC: Outstanding <u>(Proceed at risk)</u></p>

	<p>COVID19 Pandemic- (March-May Lockdown) unsure of impact, the team is continuing to develop documents in line with delivery, and implementation the below dates may alter slightly.</p> <p>Stage 1 sign off end of March 2020 Stage 2 sign off January 2021</p> <p>Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: Autumn 2020 (<u>Proceed at risk</u>) Pre Planning consultation: January 2021 Planning submission: January 2021 (potential timeframe - 6 months) (<u>at risk</u>) Out to tender: Spring/Summer term 2021 (6 - 8 weeks) Evaluation: Summer/Autumn 2021 Contractor appointment: January 2022 Commencement: January 2022 (17-month construction period) Conclusion: July 2023 Occupation: September 2023</p>
<p>Rhosyfedwen Primary School Remodelling (RPM) <u>(Pending confirmation of available funding post-delivery of the above new build)</u></p>	<p>Business case: Outline Business Case for EFNB as well as RPM and OBC/SOC Strategic Outline Case combined: Submission WG Date: Scrutiny group 28th February 2020, Investment panel 15th April 2020 Revised Business Case Submission Addendum April 2020 - for 14th May Business Case and 18 June scrutiny panels. FBC Full Business Case: Submission to WG Date: 31st August 2020, Project Brief: Spring/Summer 2020 Apporved FBC: Outstanding Site investigations: Spring/Summer 2020 (<u>Proceed at risk</u>) COVID19 Pandemic- (March-May Lockdown) unsure of impact, the team is continuing to develop documents in line with delivery, and implementation the below dates may alter slightly. Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: Summer/Autumn 2021 (<u>Proceed at risk</u>) Building Regulations/planning submission: Summer/Autumn 2021 (<u>Proceed at risk</u>) Out to tender: Summer/Autumn 2021 Evaluation: Autumn 2021 Contractor appointment: January 2022 Commencement: March 2022 (12-months contract period) Conclusion March 2023 Occupation: March 2023</p>
<p>Primary School Re-modelling Cwm & Beaufort Hill Primary <u>(Pending confirmation of available funding post-delivery of the above new build)</u></p>	<p>Business case: Outline Business Case for EFNB as well as RPM and OBC/SOC Strategic Outline Case combined: Submission WG Date: Scrutiny group 28th February 2020, Investment panel 15th April 2020 Revised Business Case Submission Addendum April 2020 - for 14th May Business Case and 18 June scrutiny panels. FBC Full Business Case: Submission to WG Date: 31st August 2020, Apporved FBC: Outstanding Brief: Summer/Autumn-term 2023 Tender document preparation/detailed design work: Spring-term 2023 Out to tender: Autumn-term 2023 Contractor appointment: Autumn 2023/Spring-term 2024 Commencement: Spring-term 2024 (depending on scope of work) Conclusion: September 2025</p>

	Band B – Band B Secondary School Remodelling Projects
Secondary School Re-modelling Brynmawr Foundation	<p>Maintenance, condition and suitability review: Summer-term 2019</p> <p>Headteacher engagement: Autumn-term 2019</p> <p>Business Justification Case: Submission WG Date: February 2021, Scrutiny group 11 March 2021 Investment panel 15 April 2021</p> <p>Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: December 2021 – May 2022</p> <p>Out to tender: June/July 2022 (4-6 weeks)</p> <p>Contractor appointment: Autumn 2022</p> <p>Commencement: Spring-term 2022 (1-year construction period per/project)</p> <p>Conclusion: September 2025</p>
Secondary School Re-modelling The River Centre – Secondary Campus	<p>Maintenance, condition and suitability review: Autumn 2020</p> <p>Headteacher engagement: Autumn-term 2020</p> <p>Business Justification Case: Submission WG Date: April 2021, Scrutiny group 13 May 2021 Investment panel 10 June 2021</p> <p>Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: May – December 2021</p> <p>Out to tender: January 2022 (4-6 weeks)</p> <p>Contractor appointment: May 2022</p> <p>Commencement: Summer-term 2022 (1-year construction period per/project)</p> <p>Conclusion: September 2025</p>
Secondary School Re-modelling ALC-Secondary Campus	<p>Maintenance, condition and suitability review: Summer-term 2019</p> <p>Headteacher engagement: Autumn-term 2019</p> <p>Business Justification Case: Submission WG Date: Aug 2021, Scrutiny group 16 September 2021 Investment panel 14 October 2021</p> <p>Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: December 2021 – May 2022</p> <p>Out to tender: June/July 2022 (4-6 weeks)</p> <p>Contractor appointment: Autumn 2022</p> <p>Commencement: Spring-term 2022 (1-year construction period per/project)</p> <p>Conclusion: September 2025</p>
Secondary School Re-modelling Tredegar Comprehensive	<p>Maintenance, condition and suitability review: Autumn 2020</p> <p>Headteacher engagement: Autumn-term 2020</p> <p>Business Justification Case: Submission WG Date: October 2021, Scrutiny group 11 November 2021 Investment panel 9 December 2021</p> <p>Tender document preparation/ detailed design work: May – December 2021</p> <p>Out to tender: January 2022 (4-6 weeks)</p> <p>Contractor appointment: May 2022</p> <p>Commencement: Summer-term 2022 (1-year construction period per/project)</p> <p>Conclusion: September 2025</p>

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Agenda Item 8

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **9th February 2021**

Report Subject: **Youth Service Performance Report 2019 – 2020**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. J Collins, Executive Member for Education**

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

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
✓	19.01.21	26.01.21			09.02.21	24.02.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the work of the Youth Service, demonstrating how the Council meets its statutory requirements of providing a Youth Service for young people aged 11-25 and a Counselling Service for 11-18 year olds. The report will also include an update on how the service has refocussed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 'Youth Work in Wales Statistical Release 2019-20' is not published at time of writing the report, but should be released later in the year to use as a comparison.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The report will update Members on the continued progress of all areas of the Youth Service and how the service has supported the Education Directorate's response to COVID-19. The report will outline the most recent data linked to the reach, accreditation outcomes and reduction of number of young people becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Key legislation and guidance underpinning Youth Work in Wales includes the new National Youth Work Strategy for Wales, Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes, the Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) Act 2015.
- 2.2 Blaenau Gwent Youth Service provides information, support and learning opportunities for young people aged 11-25 and also supports young people through earlier transitions from 9 years old, based on a voluntary relationship between the young person and youth worker. In addition, the Youth Service co-ordinates the 11-18 Counselling Service (statutory), the extended 18-25 Counselling Service and the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF), which aims to reduce the numbers of young people who become NEET (not in Education, Employment or Training) up to the age of 25 through a partnership approach. The partnership now includes a focus on Youth Homelessness and Wellbeing.

- 2.3 The Youth Service is a community based provision, housed in the Ebbw Vale Cultural Centre and Abertillery Youth Centre, with support offered to young people across all secondary schools, year 6 primary schools and the River Centre 3-16. Youth Clubs are provided in Abertillery, Cwm, and Ebbw Vale. Youth Club developments are underway in Tredegar and Brynmawr through support from community groups and a dedicated Detached Youth Team is working across the Abertillery and Llanhilleth communities, requested for and funded by the Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council.
- 2.4 Open Access Youth Services include D of E (Duke of Edinburgh), Detached and Outreach, Youth Information Service and Youth Info Champs, Young Reps Volunteering programme, Youth Ambassadors (YAMs), Health and Wellbeing workshops and training, Youth Clubs, Open for Youth Nights, school holiday programmes and the 11-25 Counselling Service.
- 2.5 Targeted Youth Services include Inspire to Achieve 11-16, Inspire to Work 16-24, Youth and Community Team (Youth Homelessness and Mental Health) and the Positive Futures anti-social behaviour programme.
- 2.6 The Youth Service leads on implementing the Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework, prevention and support for young people at risk of becoming or currently NEET. This includes maintaining and developing the strategic multi-agency Raising Aspirations Group, implementing the Early Identification Tool to ensure that young people at risk of becoming NEET are known and supported, overseeing the lead worker role, and monitoring progress to ensure that the numbers of young people becoming NEET are reduced up to the age of 25.
- 2.7 The Youth Service facilitated the development of the 10 LA ESF programmes and line manages the two local ESF youth programmes, Inspire 2 Achieve and Inspire 2 Work. This funding has secured sustainability for the Youth Service's work linked to the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF). The funding is in place until 2022, which has ensured continued support for young people both at risk of becoming and currently NEET for the past 5 years. The service has also appointed additional youth workers in the service, funded by the Welsh Government's Youth Support grant, to support young people's issues of youth homelessness and mental health.
- 2.8 Since March 2020, through agreed interim arrangements, the Youth Service Manager has led on the development of a Post 16 Partnership and acted as the link officer for the Leisure Trust, facilitating the renewed five-year contract. Partnerships across these areas are positive and are integral to future delivery.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 **Option 1:** Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considers and accepts the report.
Option 2: Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considers the report and provides comments relating to improvements that can be made prior to reporting to the Executive Committee.

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

4.1 The Youth Service contributes to all 5 areas of the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan through supporting young people to overcome barriers in their life enabling them to become positive members of their community. The service also contributes to key objectives within the Corporate Plan, in particular those within Education and also Regeneration. The programmes provide support to some of the most vulnerable young people in Blaenau Gwent, supporting them to overcome significant barriers in their lives, including issues such as youth homelessness, unemployment and mental health. This work also ensures that the Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework 6 key areas are fully met.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 Impact on Budget:

In 2019/20 the Youth Service was funded partly through a core budget of £356,827, and external grants of £1,306,146 (from ESF - European Social Fund, Positive Futures, Welsh Government Youth Support Grant and other community grants and funding). Therefore, the total income for the Youth Service in 2019/20 was £1,662,973. All national grants have been secured for the next financial year, with the ESF funding secured up until 2022 and additional funding sourced from Welsh Government to continue the youth work offer to young people around youth homelessness and mental health.

5.2 Risk Including Mitigating Actions:

The reliance on external funding is identified as a risk. Securing ESF monies until 2022 has provided some stability for targeted services for the past 5 years. However, the majority of grants are funded on an annual basis which does not allow long term financial planning. This along with ESF ending in 2022, has been flagged up as a risk and needs to be considered in the Education Directorate risk planning arrangements this year as well as the Corporate Risk Register (CRR).

5.3 Legal:

There are no legal implications for this report.

5.4 Human Resources:

There are no direct staffing implications associated with this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data:**

The comparative data for the Youth Service across Wales is not available yet but year on year comparison demonstrates the service is good, taking account of its statutory duties and meeting them effectively, providing a wide range of universal and targeted opportunities for young people aged 11-25.

6.1.1 **Youth Service Impact:**

In 2019/20, 2054 individual 11-25 year olds were registered (Reach of 18%) and supported by the Youth Service, with an additional 15,089 contacts made with anonymous (not registered with the service) young people (8,000 more than the previous year). The 'reach' has slightly increased since last year with an additional 44 young people supported. We do not yet have the all Wales comparison, which will be available later this year.

6.1.2 Out of the 2054 individuals, 41% (847 young people) gained 851 nationally recognised accreditations. The number of young people gaining a qualification significantly increased this year (16% increase), which was not expected as this is not the focus of the work, but is welcome. The outcomes for each programme are now measured on improved wellbeing as well as improvement in either attendance and behaviour, rather than accreditations. It is worth noting that achievements are made voluntarily and during the young people's spare time.

6.1.3 In addition, in 2019/20 the Youth Service recorded supporting young people *anonymously* (not registered) through the 11-25 Counselling Service, C Card, detached youth work, outreach and out of school activities and events. The Youth Service had 15,089 anonymous contacts with young people (one contact is between 1-3 hours).

6.1.4 Safeguarding is an important aspect of the service. In the financial year 2019 – 2020, 62 MARFS (multi-agency referral forms) were submitted to Social Services. More detail relating to these are included in the Joint Safeguarding report to scrutiny.

6.1.5 **Effective use of core funding and grants:**

The Youth Service's core budget is effectively used to employ a small core team to access and administer external grants to meet identified need. These grants include European Social Funding, Welsh Government Youth Support Grant, Positive Futures and Children in Need. Smaller community grants are accessed in partnership with local community groups. Over the last year, both core and external funding has been secured to continue a variety of projects to meet identified needs which include Inspire 2 Achieve, Inspire 2 Work, Youth Homelessness, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Duke of Edinburgh, Detached and Outreach Youth Workers, Positive Futures (ASB programmes), Open for Youth Nights, Youth Clubs, Youth Information Service, Young Ambassadors (YAMs), the 11-25 Counselling Service, the Young Reps Volunteering Programme and the school holiday programme.

6.1.6 **Youth Engagement and Progression Framework:**

The Youth Service co-ordinates the Welsh Government's 'Youth Engagement and Progression Framework' through a strategic multi-agency partnership the Raising Aspirations Group (RAG). The partnership is mature and effective and continues to address all 6 key areas of the Framework. This includes using the Early Identification Tool (7th year), updating the online directory of support (7th year), facilitating the 'lead worker' role and further refining the tracking and support of young people through a partnership approach. All areas of the Blaenau Gwent action plan are developing well and either met or are on track.

- 6.1.7 The Youth Service also facilitates two practitioner forums: the NEET Practitioner Forum and the Vulnerable Learners Transition subgroup, which are operational multi-agency partnerships and sub groups of the RAG. These forums co-ordinate the Early Identification process, allocation of lead worker role, and robust tracking and monitoring of transition from year 6 to post 16 provision.
- 6.1.8 As a result of this co-ordinated approach with partners, there has been a steady reduction of numbers of young people becoming NEET when they leave school, reaching 1.5% (9 young people) in 2019. This was a decrease of 2 young people from the previous year, and is in line with the *lowest figure* ever achieved. We are unable to compare this information nationally until the Careers Wales national report is published later this year. Considering the context of the past year, it is extremely positive that so many young people transitioned successfully and maintained their post 16 placement.
- 6.1.9 **Youth Service Response to COVID-19**
Since March 2020, the Youth Service has supported the response to COVID-19. Although school based youth workers and counsellors returned to buildings in September, initially, the service refocussed to identify and support the most vulnerable young people known to the Youth Service, Education and schools. Since March 2020, the service supported 600 11-16 year olds and 250 16-25 year olds and from March to July made weekly contact. Initially the focus was supporting young people around the challenges they faced linked to the pandemic, including delivering essentials such as food, toiletries, wellbeing packs, supporting issues around lack of money, losing employment and facing eviction. Youth workers supported young people to find accommodation and the local authority placed some young people who would not usually be eligible to access support in bed and breakfast accommodation to try to ensure that they had a safe place to live. Youth workers also helped young people to apply for financial support.
- 6.1.10 Over time, the emergency response changed to support young people around their wellbeing. Online activities were developed such as music, cooking and art club, and face to face activities included wellbeing walks, supporting attendance at college and job interviews. The Counselling Service has continued throughout, providing online sessions, meeting young people outside, in school and the youth centre. A full summer programme was provided including a mixture of online and face to face activities. Throughout, youth club staff have been redeployed to provide outreach and the detached team have continued to work in the evenings, responding at times to requests from the Police and community members. This has been an opportunity to keep young people informed about the restrictions, any changes and what that means for them. Between April 2020 and December 2020, 24 referrals (MARFS) were made to Social Services.
- 6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**
Through the Youth Service and Counselling Service, young people are able to access support if and when they need it and are able to access new opportunities. These opportunities help broaden young people's horizons, raise their aspirations and the support ensures that all young people, no matter their experience, are able to participate. This can result in young people becoming active citizens in their

communities, making informed choices about their future and reaching their potential.

6.3 Involvement (Consultation, engagement, participation)

Involving young people is a core principle of youth work. A bi-annual consultation takes place with young people across the borough, the Youth Service's Advisory Group (YAMS) help decide on how priorities are set and each project works with young people, both in groups or as individuals to ensure they influence the delivery and design of their particular project.

6.4 Thinking for the Long Term

The support provided is expected to better prepare young people for their future and beyond the lifetime of the programmes.

6.5 Preventative Focus

All the work of the Youth Service is preventative in nature. At a very basic level, the support and opportunities can help young people to meet with each other and with trusted adults, feel part of their community which can prevent low levels of mental health, prevent incidents of anti-social behaviour and help young people become active citizens. Targeted programmes are working to prevent youth unemployment and youth homelessness.

6.6 Collaboration/Partnership Working

The Youth Service facilitates a number of partnership forums including the Raising Aspirations Group (multi-agency partnership), the NEET Practitioner Forum and the Vulnerable Learners sub group. Working in partnership is fundamental to providing a co-ordinated, effective service. The service is continually looking at how it can better develop this area as partners evolve and change.

6.7 Integration

This service impacts upon key objectives for both Education and Environment and Regeneration Directorates and for 11-25 year olds.

6.8 EqIA

N/A

7. Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 The Youth Service reports to a number of external funders and provides an annual audit return to Welsh Government. The Raising Aspirations Group monitors the progress of the local delivery of the two Inspire programmes and the new Youth and Community Team (Youth Homelessness and Mental Health). A performance monitoring report is presented annually to Education Scrutiny Committee to update Members on the performance of the Youth Service. Annual reports and evaluation reports are also provided to Education DMT. Feedback is provided to young people on a regular basis.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

National reports are due to be published later this year, which can be used as a comparative against BG's performance.

List of Acronyms

- RAG: Raising Aspirations Group (strategic multi-agency partnership)
- NEET: Young people not in education, employment or training
- YEFP: Youth Engagement and Progression Framework; a national framework which outlines the processes and support that needs to be in place to support young people aged 11-25 to prevent them from becoming NEET.
- UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- D of E: Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme
- ASB: Anti-Social Behaviour
- EIT: Early Identification Tool which is run twice a year to identify which young people are at risk of becoming NEET

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Agenda Item 9

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **9th February 2021**

Report Subject: **Use of Consultants**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor J Collins, Executive Member Education**

Report Submitted by: **Lynn Phillips, Corporate Director Education**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	17/12/2021	26.01.21			09.02.21			

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with the information requested, relating to expenditure incurred during 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 on the use of consultants to support, supplement and complement the work of Officers across the Council.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Consultants are widely used across the whole public sector including Welsh Government for a number of different purposes. At Blaenau Gwent (BG) we use consultants in a number of ways:

- To provide assistance in specialist areas where there is no or limited expertise or experience within the Council e.g. treasury management, VAT, Legal
- To provide independent advice and a different perspective (challenge)
- To supplement resources where there is insufficient capacity to undertake a specific, identified task e.g. because the work has come into the Council unexpectedly, or where the work needs to be progressed within a specific / limited time period.
- To provide training to BG staff to enhance their own expertise e.g. changes to legislation

- 2.2 The advantage of engaging Consultants is also that they are only needed for a shorter period of time enabling an organisation to pay for that skill on demand only when they need it. This is often an effective use of the Council's resource and avoids / replaces the need to employ additional staff, with specialist knowledge & skills, on a permanent basis.

- 2.3 During 2018/19 and 2019/20 the Council spent a total of £0.7m & £1.1m on Consultants across all services, the attached appendix identifies those Consultants, the costs and the reason for engagement relating to the Corporate Services portfolio. Each Scrutiny will receive a similar report covering their areas of responsibility.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

Option 1:

- 3.1 To note the use of consultants and accept the report.

Option 2:

- 3.2 To note and challenge the use of consultants.

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

Corporate Plan 2018-22, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

This proposal supports the amendments made to the Outcome Statements within the Corporate Plan in its review in July 2020.

Corporate Plan 2020/22 Outcome Statements:

- Protect and enhance our environment and infrastructure to benefit our communities
- To enable people to maximise their independence, develop solutions and take an active role in their communities
- An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

- 5.1.1 The attachment at Appendix 1 details the cost of consultants commissioned by the Council for the period 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 for the Corporate Services Portfolio.

- 5.1.2 The costs incurred are summarised below:

Funding Stream	2018/2019 £	2019/2020 £
Capital:		
Internal	0	3,000
External (Grant)	0	0
Total Capital	0	3,000
Revenue:		
Internal	97,904	293,564
External (Grant)	2,850	39,067

Total Revenue	100,754	332,631
Total Expenditure	100,754	335,631

5.1.3 The table above highlights that for Corporate Services portfolio 9.6% of the expenditure incurred on consultants have been funded externally either by grant or contributions from partner organisations

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The risks associated with not engaging specialist consultants when needed could result in negligence, poor project outcomes, insufficient resources, unable to draw down external funding, existing staff under excessive pressure and the Council being taken to court.

5.3 ***Legal***

No legal issues associated with this report.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

The HR impacts are included in the risks but will include excessive pressure on staff if consultants were not available. Specialist expertise missing in certain areas of the service which could also lead to legal liabilities for the Council or opportunities missed for progressing projects to support the local communities or economy.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Performance data is attached at Appendix 1.

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

6.2.1 The use of Consultants is key in supporting the Council to deliver both capital and revenue projects, the outcome of which is new, improved, quality services and facilities for the residents of Blaenau Gwent.

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

6.3.1 The procurement of consultants will comply with the Councils approved Standing Orders for Contracts.

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

6.4.1 When considering future projects/schemes, professional fees/Consultancy costs are built into the outline project costs / Grant application.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

6.5.1 The use of Consultants supports the Council to deliver on specific projects and initiatives. In some instances, this may result in the Council missing out on where otherwise the Council may miss out on opportunities, funding or project delivery.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

N/A

6.7 ***Integration***

N/A

6.8 ***EqIA***

Screening has been undertaken and no full assessment is required.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Monitoring will form part of the Project Management arrangements.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 – Analysis of expenditure incurred on Consultancy Costs*

PORTFOLIO	SCHEME	CONSULTANT	DESCRIPTION OF WORKS	YEAR		Funded By
				2018/2019 £	2019/2020 £	
CAPITAL EXPENDITURE						
Education	Band B - New Primary Ebbw Fawr Valley	ALPINE LAND SURVEYORS LTD	Topographical Surveys		990	External Grant
Education	Band B - Welsh Medium New Build	ALPINE LAND SURVEYORS LTD	Topographical Surveys		1,350	External Grant
Education	St. Marys CIW MUGA	ALPINE LAND SURVEYORS LTD	Topographical Surveys	495		External Grant
Education	21st Century Schools Six Bells Project	BUILDINGS FOR TOMORROW LTD	BREAAM Design / Assessment	6,184		External Grant
Education	VRP - Discovery Gateway	EIBE LTD	Design, supply and Installation of Play equipment		96,791	External Grant
Education	Band B - Welsh Medium Remodelling Bro Helyg	PLAYGARDEN DESIGN & RESOURCES LTD	Landscape Architect Design Service for Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg. - Ecological Appraisal/Reptile mitigation -		1,500	External Grant
Education	Band B - New Primary Ebbw Fawr Valley	STURGESS ECOLOGY	Badminton grove		805	External Grant
Education	Band B - New Primary Ebbw Fawr Valley	THE COAL AUTHORITY	Coal Mining Report		99	External Grant
Education	Band B - Welsh Medium New Build	THE COAL AUTHORITY	Coal Mining Report	156		External Grant
TOTAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE				6,835	101,535	
REVENUE EXPENDITURE						
Education	Lifelong Learning	BRIDEWELL CONSULTING	Information Security Investigation	-	850	Revenue Budget
Education	Secondary ESP Preparation	BRYAN JEFFREYS	Agreement / Support to Governing bodies - schools in intervention	10,725	24,050	Revenue Budget
Education	Lifelong Learning	DATA ANALYSIS & CONSULTANCY LTD	Education Data Analysis / FADE	18,278	19,228	Revenue Budget
Education	Lifelong Learning	DAVID EVANS	Outdoor Education Advisor	11,271	12,551	Revenue Budget
Education	Youth Revenue Grant	EDGE ENTERTAINMENT CONSULTANTS LTD	School Expenditure	-	525	School Expenditure
Education	Abertillery 3 - 16	GARETH MORGAN CONSULTANCY LTD	School Expenditure	-	125	School Expenditure
Education	Abertillery 3 - 16 EIG	GARETH MORGAN CONSULTANCY LTD	School Expenditure	-	200	School Expenditure - External Grant
Education	Primary - Cwm	GARETH MORGAN CONSULTANCY LTD	School Expenditure	370		School Expenditure
Education	Abertillery 3 - 16 EIG	JEN SUMMERS CONSULTANCY LTD	School Expenditure	-	2,600	School Expenditure - External Grant
Education	Abertillery 3 - 16 PDG	KIP McGRATH EDUCATION CENTRES PONTPRIDD	School Expenditure	960		School Expenditure - External Grant
Education	Abertillery 3 - 16 EIG	KIP McGRATH EDUCATION CENTRES PONTPRIDD	School Expenditure	-	960	School Expenditure - External Grant
Education	The River Centre 3-16 LC	RESOLVE CURRICULUM CONSULTANCY	School Expenditure		11,310	School Expenditure
Education	Lifelong Learning	SHARED RESOURCE SERVICE	Digitally Excluded Learners proposal - EDTech	-	44,778	External Grant
TOTAL REVENUE EXPENDITURE				41,604	117,177	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE				48,439	218,712	

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Agenda Item 10

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **9th February 2021**
Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme: 9th March 2021**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Joanne Collins, Executive Member Education**
Report Submitted by: **Cllr Haydn Trollope, Chair of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
x	x	26.01.21			09.02.21			

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present to Members the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 9th March 2021 for discussion and agreement.

2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Scrutiny Work Programmes are key aspects of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and support the requirements of the Constitution.
 - 2.2 The topics set out in the Forward Work Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's revised Corporate Plan, corporate documents and supporting business plans.
 - 2.3 Effective work programmes are essential to ensure that the work of scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services.
 - 2.4 The Committee's Forward Work Programme was agreed in September 2020, recognising the fluidity of the document to enable the Committee to respond to urgent and emerging issues, and included timescales when reports will be considered by the Committee. The work programme is managed and implemented by the Scrutiny and Democratic Officer under the direction of the Chair and Committee.
 - 2.5 The forward work programme for the forthcoming meeting will be presented to Committee on a 6 weekly cycle in order that Members can consider the programme of work; request information is included within the reports, as appropriate and / or make amendments to the work programme.

3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 **Option 1:** The Scrutiny Committee consider the Forward Work Programme for the meeting 9th March 2021, and
 - Make any amendments to the topics scheduled for the meetings;

- Suggest any additional invitees that the committee requires to fully consider the reports; and
- Request any additional information to be included with regards to the topics to be discussed.

3.2 **Option 2:** The Scrutiny Committee agree the Forward Programme for the meeting 9th March 2021, as presented.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Forward Work Programme – Meeting on 9th March 2021

Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme

Date / Deadlines	Scrutiny Topic	Purpose	Lead Officer	Executive / Council
Tuesday 9th March 2021 Deadline: 19 th February 2021	1. School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education Statutory deadline for the policy to be published by 15th April	Pre-Decision Members to provide their views and comments on the policy, and propose any relevant changes, additions etc. prior to Executive Committee approval.	Claire Gardner	Executive meeting date 14 th April
	2. Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan 2021/22	Pre-Decision To consult Members on the EAS Business Plan for 2021/22 and consider options for 2022 onwards.	Lynn Phillips / Michelle Jones	Executive
	3. Inspire to Achieve / Work Performance	Performance Monitoring Members to consider and monitor the performance in line with targets and spend.	Joanne Sims	Executive
	4. Final School Performance	Performance Monitoring To provide Members with a summary of performance in line with accountability changes to ensure that children and young people are provided with the best start in life (KS4 final).	Lynn Phillips / Michelle Jones	Executive
	5. Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) Annual Return 2018/19	Performance Monitoring Members to consider the Annual Assessment from Welsh Government which highlights Blaenau Gwent's performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards.	Joanne Sims Invitee: Trust	Executive

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