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THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

Dydd Mercher, 16 Mehefin 2021 Dydd Mercher, 16 Mehefin 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

PWYLLGOR GWAITH

A meeting of the Pwyllgor Gwaith will be held in Ystafell y Weithrediaeth, Canolfan Ddinesig, Glynebwy on Dydd Mercher, 23ain Mehefin, 2021 at 2.00 pm.

Yours faithfully

Michelle Morris
Managing Director

AGENDA

Pages

1. CYFIEITHU AR Y PRYD

Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, mae angen o leiaf 3 diwrnod gwaith o hysbysiad ymlaen llaw os dymunwch wneud hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais.

2. YMDDIHEURIADAU

We welcome correspondence in the medium of Welsh or English. / Croesawn ohebiaith trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg.

Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

3. DATGANIADAU BUDDIANT A GODDEFEBAU

Derbyn datganiadau buddiant a goddefebau.

COFNODION

4. PWYLLGOR GWEITHREDOL 3 - 14

Ystyried cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Gweithredol a gynhaliwyd ar 16 Mehefin 2021.

EITEMAU ER PENDERFYNIAD - MATERION ADDYSG

**5. CYNNIG I YMGYNGHORI AR GYNNYDD YNG
NGHAPASITI YSGOL ARBENNIG PEN Y CWM 15 - 78**

Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfaryddwr Corfforaethol Addysg.

To: N. Daniels (Cadeirydd)
J. Collins
D. Davies
J. Mason
J. Wilkins

All other Members (for information)
Manager Director
Chief Officers

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 16TH JUNE, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

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

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

Executive Member – Education
 Councillor J. Collins

Executive Member – Environment
 Councillor J. Wilkins

Executive Member – Social Services
 Councillor J. Mason

WITH: Managing Director
 Corporate Director Education
 Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services
 Service Manager - Accountancy
 Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance
 Press Officer

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>An apology for absence was received from the Chief Officer Resources.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest and dispensations raised.</p>	
	<p><u>MINUTES</u></p>	
No. 4	<p><u>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 14th April, 2021.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 21st April, 2021.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	

	<u>GENERAL MATTERS</u>	
No. 6	<u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u> RESOLVED that the all future meetings be held at 10.00 am.	
No. 7	<u>CONFERENCES, COURSES, EVENTS AND INVITATIONS</u> The Leader reported that the following invitation had been received:- Army Broadcast Event – 9 th June, 2021 RESOLVED that Councillor Brian Thomas, Armed Forces Champion be approved to attend.	
	<u>DECISION ITEMS – CORPORATE SERVICES</u>	
No. 8	<u>PROPOSED EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2021-2022</u> This item had been omitted from the agenda and would therefore be considered at the next meeting. RESOLVED that the Executive Forward Work Programme 2021-2022 be presented to the July Executive.	
No. 9	<u>GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS</u> Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources. The following additional grants to organisations were reported:- <u>ABERTILLERY</u> <u>Llanhilleth Ward - Councillor L. Parsons</u> 1. Abertillery Bluebirds FC £100 <u>Six Bells Ward - Councillor D. Hancock</u> 1. Old Tyleryan RFC £100	

BRYNMAWR**Brynmawr Ward - Councillor J. Hill**

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------|-------|
| 1. | Karabo Gwet (Cancellation) | -£150 |
|----|----------------------------|-------|

EBBW VALE**Ebbw Vale North Ward - Councillor D. Davies,
R. Summers and P. Edwards**

- | | | |
|-----|--|------|
| 1. | Ebbw Vale Mini & Junior Rugby Club | £200 |
| 2. | Blaenau Gwent Young Stars | £200 |
| 3. | Hill Top Old Age Pensioners Association | £200 |
| 4. | Showstoppers | £200 |
| 5. | Toppers School of Dance & Drama | £100 |
| 6. | Gwent Valleys Integrated Activities Club | £200 |
| 7. | Newtown Tenants & Residents Association | £200 |
| 8. | Ebbw Vale Christmas Lights Appeal | £300 |
| 9. | Ebbw Vale Business Forum | £300 |
| 10. | Blaenau Gwent District Scout Council | £200 |
| 11. | One Life Autism Support Group | £200 |
| 12. | Blaenau Gwent Food Bank | £200 |
| 13. | Hill Top Tenants & Residents Association | £200 |
| 14. | Ebbw Vale Children's Contact Centre | £200 |
| 15. | RTB Football Club Ebbw Vale | £100 |
| 16. | Ebbw Vale Works Archival Trust | £100 |
| 17. | Glyn Ebwy Junior Football Club | £100 |
| 18. | Chairs Appeal | £100 |
| 19. | RTB Ebbw Vale Bowls | £100 |
| 20. | Providence Baptist Church | £200 |
| 21. | Hilltop Sports and Social Club | £200 |
| 22. | Willowtown Community Primary School PTFA | £200 |
| 23. | N2T Youth | £200 |
| 24. | Ebbw Vale Cricket Club | £100 |
| 25. | Ebbw Vale Operatic Society | £100 |

	<p><u>TREDEGAR</u></p> <p><u>Sirhowy Ward - Councillor B. Thomas</u></p> <p>1. Tredegar Operatic Society £200</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted and the information contained be approved.</p>	
	<p><u>DECISION ITEMS – ENVIRONMENT MATTERS</u></p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>ADOPTION OF LITTER AND FLYTIPPING STRATEGY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager – Street Scene.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services outlined the report which sought approval for the adoption of a new Council Litter and Fly-Tipping Strategy for 2021-2026. The Corporate Director welcomed the report as a significant improvement had been made in reducing litter on streets across the Borough and the Strategy would strengthen this work to be taken forward over the next 5 years.</p> <p>The Executive Member – Environment welcomed the report all identified with issues noted in the report as an Elected Member numerous complaints in relation to litter and flytipping was received on a daily basis. It was a new initiative and Blaenau Gwent was the first Local Authority in Wales to adopt a Litter and Fly Tipping Strategy in which pulled together a number of strands. It also recognised the work undertaken to date and the excellent work of the many Litter Champions across Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>The Executive Member added that the Strategy strengthened the existing commitment given by this administration on the cleanliness of our area and the Borough. The Strategy would look at different ways to identify the underlying causes and ascertain what more could be done. The Executive Member stated the importance of monitoring progress going forward and noted the action plan which detailed the long and short term goals. The Strategy would continue to evolve and the Executive Member looked forward to having sight of the progress reports which would have input for the important key stakeholders involved in the process.</p>	

In conclusion, the Executive Member wished to thank Keep Wales Tidy for their support which had been very welcomed and advised that the report had also been supported by Scrutiny.

The Executive Member – Economic Development and Regeneration also welcomed the report and concurred that it was an important report which Elected Members, the Council and our constituents had an opportunity to play their part.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the adoption of the draft Blaenau Gwent Litter and Fly-tipping Strategy 2021-2026 be approved (Option 1).

No. 11

HIGHWAY CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME 2021-2022

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Community Services.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services advised that the report detailed three areas in terms of the highways works. It gave an update on progress of the current Highway Capital Works programme 2017–2021, improvements made over the years and set out options around a future 2021-2022 investment in the Authority’s highways network.

The Corporate Director advised that a capital sum of £2.115m was generated from a 20 year prudential borrow based on revenue contributions of £130k per year. The current gross replacement value of the Highway Network was estimated at £1.093 billion and was the Authority’s most valuable material asset. The Corporate Director outlined the key points of the report which included the following:-

- Network
- Highway Capital Works Programme 2021-22 – Priorities & Options
- Additional Programme of Welsh Government Highway Related Funded Works 2021/2022
- Road Safety Revenue and Safe Routes in Communities
- Active Travel Fund

In conclusion, the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services referred to the options for recommendation and noted the preferred option.

The Executive Member for Environment welcomed the report and advised that this was another key priority for this administration and formed the ongoing commitment for upgrading the residential roads. The report identified the improvements already made in the Authority's Highways Network which was welcomed.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and residential roads, A & B Priority Roads and highway safety works be agreed (Option 2) as follows:-

A & B Priority Roads

A4048 Heathfield Full Reconstruction Works

A4046 Cwm Bypass Resurfacing

Highway Safety Traffic Management Works

Crash Barrier Replacement at A4281 Garnlydan

Crash Barrier Replacement at A467 Abertillery

Residential Roads: (16 schemes – 1 per Ward)

Southend and Walter Street, Georgetown

Mount Pleasant Road, Ebbw Vale North

Institution Terrace, Ebbw Vale South

Maes-y-Cynw Terrace, Llanhilleth

Jubilee Road and Graig Road, Six Bells

Powell Street and High Street (section), Abertillery

Coronation Street, Blaina

South and Hereford Street, Beaufort

Aneurin Crescent, Brynmawr

King Street, Cwm

Railway Terrace, Sirhowy

Stable Lane & Parkville, Tredegar C&W

School Road, Rassau

Waunheulog, Nantyglo

Victoria Street, Cwmtillery

Rhyd Y Blew Roundabout, Badminton

Blaenant Ind Est Resurfacing

DECISION ITEM – EDUCATION MATTERS

No. 12 SCHOOL ORGANISATION POLICY (2021/2024)

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.

The Corporate Director Education advised that the report detailed the review of the School Organisation Policy (2021-24) and sought Executive approval. The Corporate Director noted that it was proposed that the revised policy be adopted and implemented from the start of new academic year 2021/22. The Corporate Director further spoke to the report and outlined key priorities around school organisation and planning process as outlined in the report.

The Corporate Director Education also noted the successful significant school organisation proposals and gave a detailed overview of the outcomes achieved as part of the 21st Century Schools Programme to date. It was stated that sound progress had been made and priorities are on track for 2021/2022.

The Executive Member for Education welcomed the report which was timely given the impact of Covid-19. The Executive Member noted the revisions to the Policy and strategic priorities as outlined by the Corporate Director which accurately reflected the future direction of Education.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the proposed changes to the Blaenau Gwent School Organisation Policy 2021 be agreed (Option 1).

MONITORING ITEMS – CORPORATE SERVICES

No. 13

COMMERCIAL STRATEGY
QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Chief Officer Commercial.

The Leader noted the report which outlined Quarter 4 performance monitoring report of the Commercial Strategy. The report had been presented as a monitoring item, although it evidenced a great deal of good work in terms of strategic commissioning of the contact centre and there are aspects of the contact centre which would be important to Members, particularly around the ‘Out of House’ Service, the Locality Response Teams who had undertaken a phenomenal amount of invaluable work which over the last period of time and indeed the digital programme which would be crucial as the Authority continued to move forward.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the quarter 4 progress update against the Commercial Strategy be noted (Option 1).

No. 14

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY –
QUARTERLY UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Chief Officer Commercial.

The Leader referred to the report which detailed the Quarter 4 update of the Communications Strategy. The Leader noted that the Communications area continued to be caught up in the Covid-19 pandemic and felt that the work of the Communications Team had been valuable during the pandemic to ensure Blaenau Gwent was kept fully informed.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the quarter 4 (January to March 2021) update against the Communication Strategy be noted (Option 1).

MONITORING ITEMS – EDUCATION

No. 15 EDUCATION DIRECTORATE – RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.

The Corporate Director Education noted the report and provided an overview of the current response, both from an Education and the Corporate response, which had been provided to support schools during the pandemic. The report reflected the activity for autumn and spring terms and advised that the impact of more than 12 months' disruption for learners would need to be planned in the short, medium and long terms to ensure development and progression

The Corporate Director added that the Council had established a corporate recovery framework which was detailed at Appendix 2 of the report and a key strand of this work would be a learning sub-group that would be led by the recently appointed Head of School Improvement and Inclusion. The Corporate Director noted the Education Directorate's top priority in the EAS business plan. The Estyn Thematic Review had previously been considered by the Executive and provided a positive overview of the Council's secure response in supporting the Authority's our schools during the pandemic.

The Executive Member for Education was pleased that Estyn had recognised as part of the Thematic Review the strong corporate response made by the Council in supporting our schools during these unprecedented times.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development concurred with Corporate Director and advised that as a Governor of a local school, the Executive Member felt that the work which had been undertaken across the Council had been outstanding and the extra support needed for schools was available. The governors had been 'blown away' by the way all levels of staff had responded. All governors were grateful for the work undertaken across the whole Authority and the Executive Member extended his thanks accordingly.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted (Option 1).

No. 16

BLAENAU GWENT EDUCATION SERVICES
SELF EVALUATION AND BUSINESS PLANNING

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.

The Corporate Director Education advised that Blaenau Gwent's Education Services, with the emphasis on 'corporate support' remained totally committed to self-review and self-evaluation and these are fundamental in continuing to improve the services we provide to learners across the board. There was a standardised process for self-evaluation which was encompassed into the day to day of work, reports are presented to Scrutiny and the Executive and all these processes were in line with Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) framework

The Corporate Director further noted some examples from areas where good progress had been made and where further improvement was required as detailed in the report.

The Executive Member for Education welcomed the large number of areas where progress had been made and that self-evaluation continued to focus on the appropriate areas for development.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted (Option 1).

EXEMPT ITEM

DECISION ITEMS – ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

No. 18 **CHARITABLE LAND, FORMER YSGOL GYMRAEG,
KING STREET, BRYNMAWR**

Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.

RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Estates Officer.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services provided an overview of the report and outlined the key points. The Corporate Director Education added that there had been engagement with the relevant area of Education.

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report which contained information relating to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted and Option 1 as detailed in the report be approved.

Agenda Item 5

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 21.06.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 21.06.21

Committee: **Executive Committee**
Date of meeting: **23rd June 2021**
Report Subject: **Proposal to Consult on an Increase in Pen y Cwm Special School Capacity**
Portfolio Holder: **Education and Learning Portfolio – Joanne Collins**
Report Submitted by: **Corporate Director of Education - Lynn Phillips and Service Manager – Education Transformation and Business Change – Claire Gardner**

Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
15.6.21	17.6.21	21.06.21				23.6.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide a detailed overview of the statutory consultation undertaken by Education in relation to the proposal to extend the capacity of Pen y Cwm Special School. The report provides an overview of the consultation:
- methodology;
 - process; and,
 - outcomes including key themes emerging from the responses received
- 1.2 A determination is sought from Executive Committee in line with the proposal to proceed to Statutory Notice consultation outcome.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 Consultation Process and Methodology

The Welsh Government School Organisation Code – second edition (2018), dictates that proposals **must** be published for the following elements of school reorganisation:

1. the opening of a maintained school (including a special school);
2. the closing of a maintained school (including a special school);
3. to make a regulated alteration to a maintained school; and,
4. to change the category of a maintained school.

- 2.2 Therefore, the proposal to increase capacity at Pen y Cwm **must** be subject to a formal consultation as the Council is proposing to increase pupil capacity by over 10% - from 120 to 175.

- 2.3 The consultation was initiated and conducted via a formal consultation document and accompanying online survey (please refer to **Appendix 1** for the consultation document), which was fully compliant with the statutory requirements set out within the aforementioned Code. The purpose of consultation was to establish the views and opinions of consultees in relation to the proposal, in order to inform the Council's political decision making process, along with the next steps associated with the proposal. In accordance with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code, the Authority is required to publish a consultation report (at least 2 weeks prior to the publication of statutory notice) which:

- summarises the issues raised by consultees;
- responds to these by means of clarification, amendment to the proposal or rejection of the concerns, with supporting reasons;
- sets out Estyn's response to the consultation in full; and,
- responds to Estyn's response by means of clarification, amendment to the proposal or rejection of the concerns, with supporting reasons.

2.4 Formal consultation commenced on Monday 26th April 2021, upon publication of the formal consultation document on the Council's website. The process then concluded on Sunday 6th June 2021 at midnight. Consultees were asked to provide their views, opinions and feedback via one or more of the following methods:

- attending a pre-arranged virtual or face to face session;
- completion of an on-line survey; and/or,
- in writing via the 21st Century Schools email address.

2.5 The Council targeted consultees as directed by the Welsh Government School Organisation Code (please refer to **Appendix 2** for a comprehensive list of consultees who were provided with the necessary documentation). Electronic letters were distributed to:

- all Blaenau Gwent schools to staff, parents and pupils;
- all Governing Bodies via the Education Achievement Service; and,
- other consultees as detailed within Appendix 2

In total, 20 formal responses were received via letter, email or survey.

Public Engagement Overview

2.6 Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, direct public engagement within the affected group was limited and governed by a COVID Secure Risk Assessment. However, the consultation document stipulated that should individuals or groups wish to engage with officers to discuss the proposal, a session or telephone call could be arranged. On this occasion, there were no requests received from the public and/or other key consultees over and above the pre-arranged sessions. Neither were there any telephone enquires pertaining to the consultation. Education held 7 pre-planned sessions with key consultees (including those directly affected by the proposal). These sessions were attended by 66 consultees (for more information please refer to **Appendix 3**). During the aforementioned sessions, a series of questions were posed and addressed by Council officers, for a detailed overview of both the questions posed and Council responses, please note **Appendix 4**.

Written Response Overview

2.7 The Council received 9 responses in total via email, 7 of which supported the proposal, 1 did not support the proposal as presented in the consultation document and finally, the response from Estyn highlighted the need for further information, which has been addressed within section 2.21 below. Please refer to **Appendix 5** for the redacted correspondence log. No petitions were received.

2.8 The Council received 11 survey responses in total, an overview of which can be found in **Appendix 6**. However, the data below provides an overview of the correspondence outcomes in terms of the level of support for the proposal:

- Fully support the proposal - 9 (82%)
- Partially support the proposal - 1 (9%)
- Do not support the proposal - 1 (9%)

2.9 10 (90%) respondents provided additional comments relating to the proposal, with 1 (10%) participant choosing not to comment, opting only to express their preference. There were 11 respondents who expressed support for the proposal, the split in terms of representation for these consultees is detailed below:

- 1 local resident
- 2 parents
- 4 school staff (representative of both teaching and non-teaching)
- 1 Social Services representative
- 1 Trade Union representative
- 2 with no indication of which sector or organisation they represented

2.10 **Social Media Engagement**

The Corporate Communication team were able to establish social media interactions and engagement with consultation posts, a summary of which is detailed below (for more information please refer to **Appendix 8**):

A total of 20 Council posts (outbound) were made via Facebook & Twitter, an assessment of which revealed:

- A Twitter reach of 121,000
- A Facebook reach of 12,000
- (4) likes and (1) retweet on Twitter
- (58) likes and (15) loves on Facebook

2.11 **Thematic Analysis**

The Education Transformation team employed a thematic analysis methodology in assessing the views of the consultees. This method is one of the most common used in qualitative research and is utilised to identify patterns emergent throughout a dataset i.e. key themes such as language. The emergent themes and patterns are important to the questions posed, in highlighting the impact of the proposal, which in turn will support Executive Committee to make an informed decision on how to proceed. This process is interpretive; however, interpretation risks are largely mitigated by the presentation of all responses received (please refer to **Appendices 5, 6 and 8** for an overview of all comments, views and responses).

2.12 The primary themes arising from the analysis of responses along with the frequency of each of the aforementioned themes is detailed in **Appendix 7**.

- 2.13 The top 3 themes were:
- Specialist provision/facilities – 17
 - Increased Demand – 16
 - Long-term Impact –15
- 2.14 The themes centred around the consultees reinforcing what they felt to be the most important considerations and aspects of the proposal for the Council to take forward.
- 2.15 During recent years, school organisation consultations have received a higher proportion of negative than positive responses. However, it is important to note that this consultation received a greater level of support than challenge, with the primary challenge focusing on the need for sustained high quality provision.
- 2.16 **Children & Young People’s responses**
Pen y Cwm Special School and the Council’s Policy and Partnerships team were engaged within the consultation process, in order to support the engagement of both children and young people. Virtual sessions were arranged with both the Youth Forum and the School Council at Pen y Cwm.
- 2.17 **Youth Forum Responses:**
- *‘This really matters if those spaces are needed, as those children should benefit from those spaces’.*
 - *‘Those young people with additional needs should have the same opportunities as other young people to have their education locally’.*
- 2.18 **School Council Response**
A session was delivered with the School Council. 7 pupils attended the session and subsequently completed an evaluation form, all of whom were supportive of the proposal. The pupil’s evaluative comments in support of the proposal to increase the capacity, included:
- *‘Because we can make more friends’*
 - *‘Exciting to go to new area’*
- 2.19 **ESTYN Response**
A formal Estyn response was received during the consultation period and based on the consultation document. The full response is provided in **Appendix 5** (response no. 5). Estyn concluded that:
‘The proposer has outlined several key benefits of the proposal to extend the capacity at Pen y Cwm Special School from 120 to 175 places, with effect from September 2021. It has not however demonstrated clearly enough how the Council will remodel the existing learning environment to create additional classroom spaces and associated facilities that will fully benefit the quality of provision for current pupils. Our opinion is that the proposal does not provide enough information for us to evaluate whether the current standards of education and provision in the area will at least be maintained or improved’.

2.20 **The Council's Response:**

The Council is seeking to take forward a two-part proposal, whereby the first phase involves internal remodelling of the existing school site, which also encompasses the former Integrated Children's Centre (ICC), Ebbw Fawr Primary School staffroom and shared bistro area, the latter of which currently has limited use. The former ICC which is situated on the first floor of Pen y Cwm School, is not currently suitable in facilitating the delivery of teaching and learning. The proposal seeks to transform this area into a Post 16 base, inclusive of a common room and life skills area, which will in turn free-up additional classroom space for secondary pupils on the first floor. In addition, it is planned for Ebbw Fawr staffroom and the shared bistro area, to be occupied by Pen y Cwm to compliment the Post 16 provision, whilst also creating a more extensive and dedicated area for the growing numbers of staff. This area will facilitate PPA, along with internal and external meetings. The Ebbw Fawr staffroom will then be relocated into an identified available space within the primary school. The primary aim of the remodelling work will be to ensure that these spaces are transformed and suitable for the delivery of teaching and learning.

2.21 The ground floor learning bay area within Pen y Cwm is currently an open space in which programmed activities such as physical therapy take place. This area will be transformed to create additional primary classrooms, with the activities which take place in this areas re-programmed in the shared hall space. Use of the specialist areas i.e. the science and technology room can resume based upon a timetable, as they will no longer be used to house dedicated classes. In addition, ancillary areas, toilets and hygiene facilities will also be created in and around the additional space. The first floor soft play space currently housed within the ICC area will be re-located to the ground floor to support engagement within primary phase. Finally, the current configuration of rooms on the first floor will be reviewed, to create a larger sensory space and appropriate toilet facilities. The proposed remodelling programme will create the additional spaces required, whilst also re-instating shared use of specialist areas that currently house dedicated classes.

2.22 The second phase of the proposal will be progressed simultaneously, which involves the identification of medium to long-term options to support sustained growth and development of the school. The aim of the proposal is to address the current gaps in provision, whilst supporting the reinstatement of 'lost' specialist areas and planning for the medium to long-term. Therefore, it is anticipated that both standards and provision will be improved, whilst realising maximum benefits for learners.

2.23 **Consultative Conclusion**

In conclusion, the consultation process has demonstrated that the proposal has widespread support from key stakeholders. There is recognition by both consultees and the Council of the need to address the short, medium and long-term capacity requirements, whilst ensuring that specialist provision remains uncompromised. Education remain committed to the delivery of the proposal, as does Pen y Cwm Special School. The two phased approach will support effective management of current issues, whilst allowing the Council,

the school and other key stakeholders to engage in the development of an effective and sustainable long-term solution.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

There are 2 options associated with the consultation, as follows:

- **Option 1** – The Executive Committee considers and accepts the out-turn report, associated documents and course of action, including proceeding to Statutory Notice
- **Option 2** – Executive Committee provide comments in relation to improvements that can be made in relation to the proposed course of action, in consideration of the School Organisation Code (2018) and established timeline.

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

4.1 In accordance with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code (2018), there is a statutory requirement for the Council to undertake statutory consultation with all interested and affected parties. This is necessary due to the fact that the proposal will see an increase in the number of pupils at the school, which when coupled with previous capacity increases, would increase the number of pupils by 10% or the relevant number of such pupils (whichever is the lesser). This section provides an overview of the consultation process.

4.2 Education is a strategic priority within the Corporate Plan. In order to enable people to maximise their independence, develop solutions and take an active role in their communities, the growth, development and sustainability of our special schools is necessary to meet the demand.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 **Impact on Budget**

5.1.2 There are capital cost implications associated with this proposal for the Council, which are circa £250,000. This will be met via both the Capital Maintenance Grant and the Welsh Government ALN Grant funding, so therefore this has no cost pressure implications for the Council's Capital Programme.

5.1.3 Pen y Cwm Special School is funded in accordance with Blaenau Gwent Council's Fair Funding policy, and will receive resources on the same basis as any other school within Blaenau Gwent, based upon pupil numbers and the area of the school building. In April 2020/21 pupil funding at Pen y Cwm Special School for Age Weighted Pupil Unit and Category funding was £2,399,785 (other factors funding is not included), this figure is based upon the 141 pupils on roll. Based on the average pupil cost of £16,925, the AWPU/category funding costs for 175 pupils will be circa £2.9 million, which is an increase of £575,450 - if all places were to be fully allocated.

5.1.4 Pen y Cwm generates income in excess of £522,259, as a result of the 19 Out of County placements for learners being educated within Blaenau Gwent, whilst living in another Local Authority area.

- 5.1.5 Blaenau Gwent currently has 20 ALN pupils that are educated outside the Local Authority at a cost of £896,000. If Pen y Cwm Special School was able to increase capacity, there would be opportunities to consider making education provision for some of the 20 pupils back in Blaenau Gwent which would contribute to cost avoidance. However, it is recognised that in some cases, that pupils will continue to receive their education Out of County in line with their specialist needs.
- 5.1.6 The additional funding requirement will be met from a combination of:
- existing resources (from the ISB reserve);
 - ISB funding arising from pupil reductions in BGCBC mainstream schools;
 - cost avoidance for Out of County placements; and,
 - income generated from Out of County placement at Pen y Cwm Special School.
- 5.1.7 The building remodelling is proposed to take place within the existing footprint of the school, therefore, it is not anticipated that there will be any significant additional premises costs. There will be leadership implications, however, these are deemed to be relatively small based upon leadership pay scales which are reflective of the pupil population.
- 5.1.8 Costs associated with home to school transport are increasing. The transport costs associated with Out of County placement for 2019/20 were £134,000, whereas in 2020/21 and due to Covid-19, costs were in the region of £95,000. Pen y Cwm Special School transport costs for 2019/20 were £278,990 whereas for the 2020/21 academic year this rose to £292,000. These costs are regularly reviewed and subject to change in line with pupil placement
- 5.2 **Risk** - If the proposal is not taken forward, there is both a placement and a financial risk in terms of securing suitable Out of County provision for learners.
- 5.3 If current levels of Out of County placements do not reduce there will be a greater call on the ISB reserve to fund the costs associated with the proposals.
- 5.4 **Legal** – In accordance with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code (2018), there is a statutory requirement for the Council to undertake formal consultation with all interested and affected parties.
- 5.5 **Human Resources** - There are no significant HR implications arising from the proposal. The proposed increase in pupil numbers will require the Governing Body of Pen y Cwm School to plan for the workforce requirements in readiness for the respective expansions. Organisational Development will provide advice, support and guidance to the Governing Bodies for the workforce planning and consequential recruitment processes.

6. **Supporting Evidence**
- 6.1 **Performance Information and Data** – Please refer to the Consultation document (**Appendix 1**), for the date performance data relating to the proposal.
- 6.2 **Expected outcome for the public (This section is mandatory)** - The public can expect a fair and equitable consultation process, which is fully compliant with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code (2018)
- 6.3 **Involvement** - Stakeholder engagement is a key focus of all school organisation proposals. The proposal will be subject to consultation in line with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code (2018), which will then be used to inform decision making processes moving forward.
- 6.4 **Thinking for the Long term** - The consultation details a proposal which looks to secure additional Special School education places and capacity in line with placement requests and associated demand in the medium to long-term, securing sustainable growth of specialist education provision within Blaenau Gwent.
- 6.5 **Preventative focus** – The proposal seeks to address medium-term capacity issues, whilst securing sustainability to support long-term growth in line with specialist education placements within Blaenau Gwent.
- 6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working** - The consultation document, along with the development of the proposal has been developed collaboratively with the Inclusion Team, Pen y Cwm Special School, Finance, and Community Services.
- 6.7 **Integration** - The proposal seeks to secure integration for new and existing pupils supporting growth and sustainability of provision.
- 6.8 **EqIA** - An Equality Impact Screening Assessment (EQIA) has been completed in line with the consultation, which determined that there is no negative impact upon the protected characteristics. The proposal promotes equality of opportunity within Blaenau Gwent for families whose children require specialist provision, and will have a positive impact upon the protected characteristic of disability.
7. **Monitoring Arrangements** – Should the consultation proceed, there will be extensive monitoring in line with the consultation processes, responses and outcomes; which would be answered, analysed and taken via the Council’s political processes. In addition, the project would be established and managed in accordance with Blaenau Gwent Corporate Project Management Framework and the PRINCE 2 methodology.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

Appendix 1 Consultation Document
Appendix 2 Consultee List
Appendix 3 List of Sessions (including the number of participants)
Appendix 4 Consultee Questions and Council Responses
Appendix 5 Redacted Correspondence Log

Appendix 6 Online Survey Overview
Appendix 7 Thematic Analysis
Appendix 8 Views and Comments Captured via Social Media

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Statutory Consultation Document: Proposal to Extend the Capacity at Pen y Cwm Special School

Consultation period:

Commencing on: Monday 26th April 2021

Concluding on: Sunday 6th May 2021

What is this booklet about?

This booklet has been prepared for parents/carers, school staff, school governors and the wider community of Blaenau Gwent. The booklet provides an overview of the consultation process associated with the Council's proposal to extend the capacity at Pen y Cwm Special School. It will be of particular interest to parents/carers whose children are attending or looking to attend the current special school.

If you would like this information in any other format, please contact the Education Transformation team either via email or telephone, as follows:

- Email us: 21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk or,
- Call us on: (01495) 355470



Glossary of Terms - Please note the following terms used throughout this document:

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)	A learner has ALN if he/she has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for additional learning provision (ALP).
Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	Is a complex developmental condition that involves persistent challenges in social interaction, speech and nonverbal communication and restricted/repetitive behaviours. The effects of ASD and the severity of symptoms are different in each person.
Child Looked After (CLA)	Is a child in the care of a Local Authority either: through a Care Order made by a court, or voluntary agreement with their parent(s) to accommodate them.
Local Authority	An organisation that is officially responsible for all the public services and facilities in a particular area.
Local Development Plan (LDP)	Sets out each local planning authority's proposals for future development and use of land in their area.
Numbers on Roll	The number of pupils at a school (not including nursery pupils).
Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC)	PLASC is an electronic collection of pupil and school level data provided by all maintained sector primary, middle, secondary, nursery and special schools in January each year (more information can be found on the Welsh Government website).
Resource Base RB	A small class in a mainstream school for pupils with significant ALN. Not all pupils attending an RB will have a statement of ALN. Pupils are taught by specialist teachers and learning support assistants. Sometimes RB pupils also have opportunities to attend mainstream classes.
School Assessments	When a school assess a pupils needs.
School Action	When a class or subject teacher gives extra support to a pupil with ALN.
School Action Plus	When outside specialists help the class or school staff to provide extra support for a pupil with ALN. This is different or additional to the support provided through School Action.
Special School	A school for children with an additional learning need or disability, whose needs cannot be met in a mainstream school. The pupils at a special school will often have a statement of ALN.
Statement of Additional Learning Needs	A child with a statement of ALN has additional learning difficulties which need special support. This means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the child has significantly greater difficulty learning than most children of the same age, or the child has a disability that needs different educational facilities from those that the school generally provides for children.
Statutory Notice	A statutory notice is the formal publication of a finalised proposal. This will only be undertaken if a decision is made by the Council's Executive Committee to proceed with a proposal, following consideration of all responses from the consultation process. This is a legal requirement as outlined in the School Organisation Code (2018).
Statutory School Age (SSA)	A Child who is over the age of 5 and under the age of 16 that is eligible to attend school

Table of Contents

	Page
Section 1: Introduction	5
Section 2: Consultation Process	5-6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who we are consulting with? • Consultation Overview • Consultation with Children & Young People 	6 6 6
Section 3: The Proposal	7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment Objectives • Rationale and Background Information - Why change is necessary • Demand for Places • Early Years and Nursery Provision • Additional Learning Needs Provision • Options Considered • Risk and Mitigation • Benefits of Proposal • Expected Benefits and Advantages (when compared with the status quo – do nothing) • Disadvantages • Governance model • Learner travel arrangements 	7 8-9 9-10 10 10 10-12 12-13 13 13 13 13 13-14
Section 4: Consultation Outcome and Next Steps	14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consultation Report ○ Statutory Notice ○ Determination of Proposal ○ Decision Notification ○ Timeline 	14 14-15 15 15 15
Section 5: Details of Affected Schools	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil places and projections data 	15
Section 6: Other Considerations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance • Admission Arrangements 	16 16

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of the proposal on the Welsh Language • Equality impact Screening • Community & Welsh Language Impact Assessments • United Nations Conventions for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) • Engagement of Children & Young People in this Consultation • Capital Costs/Capital Receipts • Housing developments • Human Resource • Partnerships 	16 16 17 17 17 17 17-18 18 18
Section 7: Present Arrangements	19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estyn • Quality and Standards in Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Standards ○ Wellbeing & Attitudes to Learn ○ Teaching & Learning Experience ○ Care, Support & Guidance ○ Leadership & Management • Impact of the Proposal 	19 20 20 20 20 20 20 21
Section 8: Overview of the Proposal	21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admission no and arrangements and no. of nursery places • Age range • Pupil places • Capacity • Location • Category school and language • Schedule of accommodation • List of facilities provided under the Proposal • School Catchment Area • Transition arrangements • Frequently asked questions 	21 21 21 21 21 21 21 21 21 21 22
Section 9: Pro-forma	23
Appendix 1: Consultee list	24
Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment	25-26
Appendix 3: Community Impact Assessment	27-29

Section 1: Introduction



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council reviews the capacity of its schools on an annual basis. As such, the Council is responding to the increased demand and growth noted over the course of the last 3 years, in line with pupil placement requests for Pen y Cwm Special School. Pen y Cwm Special School caters for pupils (aged between 3-19 years) with a broad spectrum of complex special educational and medical needs, including profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school currently caters for Blaenau Gwent pupils, along with pupils from Out of County (OOC).

The school mission is: ***‘To empower and support individuals to be resilient and independent and to develop skills to reach their potential’.***

Learners are taught in 16 class groups and a typical class would have 1 teacher and 3 teaching assistants, with approximately 10 pupils. However, the set-up in each class is entirely dependent on pupil need. The adult/pupil ratio ensures that the individual care and educational needs of the pupils can be met. The school is supported by the physiotherapy, occupational therapy services and the speech and language therapy service. In addition, the Council’s Inclusion Service - including Educational Psychology, work closely with the school to manage and support placement.

Pen y Cwm Special School is co-located with Ebbw Fawr Learning Community Primary Phase (both schools are housed in the same building). The facilities include: classrooms, a purpose built hydro therapy pool, sensory rooms, hygiene rooms, quiet rooms, PMLD rooms, nurses office, a gymnasium, rebound room, library, art room, life skills room and science & technology room. Externally the school has an outdoor sensory garden and adventure play area along with outdoor learning areas.

The Council is committed to providing all children and young people with high quality education tailored to meet their needs, which will develop their potential, extend aspirations, promote social inclusion and contribute to the economic regeneration of the area. A provision such as Pen y Cwm Special School is essential for pupils with complex learning needs to enable them fulfil their potential. Therefore, this proposal is a key priority for the Council.

Section 2: Consultation Process

Prior to any decision being made on the proposal to extend the capacity of Pen y Cwm Special School, the Council is required to undertake statutory consultation with all interested and affected parties. This is necessary due to the fact that the proposal will see an increase in the number of pupils at the school, which when coupled with previous capacity increases, would increase the

number of pupils by 10% or the relevant number of such pupils (whichever is the lesser). This section provides an overview of the consultation process.

This consultation, will provide consultees with the opportunity to learn more about, understand and express their views on the Council's proposal, which will inform the final decision as to how the proposal is taken forward. The feedback and comments captured throughout the consultation process will be collated, analysed and reported via the Councils political processes. The Councils Executive Committee will then make the final decision based on the outcome of and feedback associated with the consultation.

Who we are Consulting with?

This Consultation Document will be distributed, in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code Version 2 (November 2018). **Appendix 1** details the full list of consultees who will be targeted during the statutory consultation period.

Consultation Overview

The consultation period for this proposal will commence on **Monday 26th April 2021**, concluding on **Sunday 6th June 2021**. Consultees can submit their views on the proposal, however, it should be noted that responses received during this period will not be logged as objection. Should the proposal proceed, and consultees wish to make an objection, they will need to do so in writing during the statutory notice period outlined on page 14/15.

The Council would like you to consider the information set out in this document and provide your views on the proposal. If you have any questions or queries on the information contained within this document, please contact us either by using the email address below, or by calling us on (01495) 355470.



21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

You are also welcome to complete the on line survey using the following link <https://wh1.snapsurveys.com/s.asp?k=161701999055>

All consultation responses should be received by **5pm on Sunday 6th June 2021 at the latest.**

The Education Transformation team has planned virtual meetings with school staff, governors, Trade Union representatives, pupils and other interested parties. A frequently asked questions page will be developed and updated throughout the consultation period.

Due to the ongoing implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council will not be offering drop in sessions. Should you feel the need to and/or feel strongly about discussing the proposal in person, please contact us via the 21st century schools email address as follows: 21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk and a virtual meeting can be arranged.

Consultation with Children and Young People

There will be an opportunity for the pupils of Pen y Cwm Special School, along with other children and young people to participate in the consultation process. All information gathered from the consultation process will form part of the consultation out-turn report.

Section 3: The Proposal

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council propose to extend the capacity at Pen y Cwm Special School from 120 to 175 places, with effect from September 2021. In order to facilitate the extended capacity, the Council will remodel the existing learning environment to create additional classroom spaces and associated facilities i.e. toilets. In addition, and alongside this, the Council will work with the school to develop a long-term plan to support sustained growth and development. Therefore, this proposal will be delivered in 2 parts:

- Part 1, to increase the capacity of Pen y Cwm Special School from 120 to 175 places in preparation for 2021/22 academic year, which would involve physical works to the existing building including:
 - Re-location of the Post 16 base (including 3 classrooms, a common room, life skills room, toilets and hygiene facilities)
 - Re-location of the current administrative area and office space (including a staff room, PPA room, conference facility and a small meeting room)
 - Creation of 2 additional primary classrooms
 - Creation of 1 additional secondary classroom and associated facilities
 - Re-location of the soft-play area to the ground floor
 - Re-development of the Science and Technology room
- Part 2, the development of a long-term plan to secure additional capacity to facilitate sustained growth and development.

The proposal would support the Blaenau Gwent's Vision for Education as follows:

'Securing excellent achievement and wellbeing for all learners through a partnership, school-led self-improving system'.

The proposal is in keeping with Blaenau Gwent's 21st Century Schools investment objectives which are:

- **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 of the right size in the right place
- **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

Rationale and Background Information - Why Change is Necessary



Pen y Cwm is a Special School catering for learners across the 3-19 age range, with a wide range of disabilities and difficulties ranging from Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) to Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD), Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Visually Impaired (VI), Hearing Impaired (HI) pupils. The school provides accessible accommodation and facilities for those who have a physical disability alongside their learning difficulty.

The new Pen y Cwm Special School opened in 2012, and replaced the former 1960's school building located in Beaufort. The new school was designed to be bigger, better and to provide many additional facilities including specialist rooms for Food Technology, Science and Design Technology, Art – specified as needed for effective delivery of the curriculum for Secondary learners by ESTYN, as part of the inspection process in 2004 and 2010 respectively. Additional facilities were created to include a parent room, an outreach/inclusion base, a common room for Post 16 learners, a 'flat' to support the development of independent living skills, a multi-purpose 'learning bay' and several other small ancillary and administrative spaces, including staff PPA areas etc. The school was built with a capacity of 120 places and based upon pupil numbers and associated predication at the time, 120 places was deemed to be suitable and sufficient. However, over the course of the last 4 years' demand for places has increased considerably, with 141 pupils currently on roll.

The school population has grown by approximately 36% since relocating November 2012. As a result, there is now very limited if any flexible space, and each of the specialist areas (including the specialist rooms for Secondary age teaching and learning) have been reconfigured to facilitate general teaching spaces for additional pupils. Therefore, each of the phases (Foundation Phase/Primary/Secondary/Post 16) are now compromised in terms of flexibility and space.

Whilst the school has gained additional floor space following the re-location of the formerly co-located Integrated Children's Centre in 2016, this space - due to suitability, has been predominantly used to house and facilitate the work of school's Business and Administration team/functions. In addition, the space has a conferencing facility which supports training and engagement with other professionals and families.

Additionally, timetabling has become compromised with allocated times in each of the specialist facilities e.g. art, food technology, gym, hydro pool and outdoor fitness area limited, due to the additional numbers of pupils. Staff welfare facilities also require address as the current staff room accommodates approximately 16 staff (pre-COVID restrictions), with a staff numbers having grown and now in excess of 90.

Pupil numbers and demand for places at Pen y Cwm Special School have significantly increased over the course of last four years, resulting in the school being oversubscribed, along with a waiting list, which as at March 2021, has 10 children and young people awaiting placement. There are a number of factors relating to this increase, including higher survival rates for children with

complex disabilities, more cases and/improved diagnosis and an increase in complex medical conditions. Therefore, the Local Authority is seeking to increase the capacity (in terms of the number of places) at the school from 120 to 175.

As at September 2020, there were 150 learners in the school with 2 placement requests awaiting allocation, since this time 9 pupils have left. However, as detailed above demand continues to increase. Pen y Cwm Special School provides a highly specialist learning environment and curriculum for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties. All those attending the school will have needs that cannot be met in a less specialised and/or mainstream school. Most pupil's also have a range of secondary needs which include medical, speech and language, physical or ASD needs.

The Local Authority is projecting a continued upward trend in terms of demand/pupil numbers going forward. Demand for places at the school continues and is subsequently putting pressure on the local authority to place pupils Out of County, should we not be able to secure additional places locally.

The Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council seeks to address the aforementioned issues by increasing the capacity of Pen y Cwm Special School to facilitate the increased demand for places and secure medium-term growth. In order to facilitate the increased capacity, remodelling works will need to be undertaken within the current school site to increase the number of classrooms for Foundation Phase, Primary, Secondary and Post 16 learners.

Demand for Places

Within Blaenau Gwent, the number of children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) has increased. At present, 18.8% (8,385) of Statutory School Age pupils in the County Borough have an Additional Learning Need/SEN Status. There are currently around 275 children with a Statement of ALN in Blaenau Gwent of Statutory School Age.

Figure 1 on page 11 provides both historic and predictive information relating to placement trends and anticipated future placement requirements at the school.

Figure 1 – Pen y Cwm Pupil Placement 6-year Trend and Projections

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Total	Average over years	Prediction based on Six year Trend			
									2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Number of requests	25	35	33	23	28	23	167	28	28	28	28	28
Number of requests agreed	17	25	25	17	19	19	122	20	20	20	20	20
Number of leavers	13	11	11	9	13	5	62	10	8	13	12	10
Net Increase	4	14	14	8	6	14	54	10	12	7	8	10

No agreed model currently exists for the planning of special school places that we know of, therefore, actual projected pupil numbers are difficult to predict. In an attempt to develop a model with the aim of predicting the number of places required, the Council has used historic data and associated trends. We have considered the number of requests for special school placement over the last six academic years, along with the number of those requests which were agreed. As a

result, we know that on average, over the last six years, there have been 28 requests for special school placement. We also know that on average, the number of special school placements agreed has been 20. We have considered this in relation to the number of special school leavers on an annual basis. By subtracting the number of leavers from the number of places agreed, we were able to establish the net increase on an annual basis. Based on the current numbers on roll, and the information above, we have predicted demand forward. Our expectation is that the capacity required in 2024/25 will be in the region of 170-180 pupils.

Demand has risen and is likely to continue to do so in line with inward migration, increased survival rates of children with complex needs and finally, placement requests from other Local Authorities with sufficiency issues. Blaenau Gwent Council is aware that the growth and demand for specialist education placements is on the increase throughout Wales. Neighbouring Authorities have undertaken consultation upon growth of special school capacity to facilitate demand, or are considering doing so, due to sufficiency of places. If Blaenau Gwent Council does not secure sufficient places for its pupils, it is unlikely that neighbouring Local Authorities will have capacity to accommodate them, resulting in potentially very high Out of County placements, increased traveling time and decreased accessibility to local education options for the most vulnerable pupils with the highest level of need.

Early Years and Nursery Provision

There are no plans for the Council to create a separate facility to facilitate pre-school provision. Nursery children are currently accommodated at Pen y Cwm Special School. Therefore, it is not anticipated that there will be any impact upon this provision, or changes to the current childcare arrangements and integrated approach which is in place. As the provision is specialist, there will be no impact upon mainstream, Welsh-medium and/or provision of religious character. Nor will there be any impact upon private or third sector provision of this nature.

Additional Learning Needs Provision

The proposal to extend the capacity and undertake physical changes to the building whilst also developing a long-term growth and sustainability plan, would create equality of access to a high-quality, 21st Century learning environment for children and young people with severe and complex learning disabilities.

Options Considered

A detailed option appraisal was undertaken in order to explore ways in which the requirement for additional specialist education places could be addressed. Factors such as location, site and type of provision were considered.

The long list of options detailed within Figure 2 below, were later re-evaluated and a short-list drawn up, so that the benefits, risks, timelines, costs etc. could be explored in much greater detail.

The key factors are securing places in the short to medium-term, which can be delivered over the course of the next academic year, to secure additional places from September 2021 onwards

Figure2 – Long List of Options

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Option 6
Description:	Business as Usual- maintain the status quo	Build an extension on to the Pen y Cwm School site	Build another special school in Blaenau Gwent	Send Pupils to a special school Out of County	Remodel the existing school site in order to create an additional 55 places, within the existing footprint of Pen y Cwm Special School, whilst working on the development of a long-term plan to secure additional capacity to facilitate sustained growth and development.	Co-location on an English-medium school with internal surplus capacity to accommodate a satellite provision.
Conclusion:	This is a standard baseline comparator which must be considered, but not an option, as it does not address the identified need. Discounted	Merits further consideration, but site constraints, special requirements and programming would not permit effective and timely implementation. Possible	Merits further investigation in line with a detailed exploration of sites, availability of land and overall programme budget. Possible	No spare capacity exists and this would not support the vision for education in securing localised, accessible and high quality provision. Discounted	Preferred way forward in addressing medium and long-term growth. Possible	Potential for disruption to both schools at a challenging time. Requires monitoring in order to address sustainability. Possible

The short list included:

- Option 1 (business as usual)- Maintain the status quo
- Option 5 (do maximum) - Remodel the existing school site in order to create an additional 55 places, within the existing footprint of Pen y Cwm Special School, whilst working on the development of a long-term plan to secure additional capacity to facilitate sustained growth and development.
- Option 6 (intermediate) - Co-location on an English-medium school with internal surplus capacity to accommodate a satellite provision.

Options 1 and 6 have been discounted as they would potentially:

- Not address the immediate and medium-term need
- Cause disruption within the existing education system on both school sites
- Require extensive remodelling and physical works that could not be delivered within the existing timeline
- Negatively affect provision and access to specialist facilities and services i.e. medical and therapy

Risks and Mitigation

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has a proven track record of managing both school build and school organisation projects – including the requirement to increase school capacity. The following risks can be managed and largely mitigated as follows:

Figure 3 – Risks and Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
If the proposal is not taken forward, there is both a placement and a financial risk in terms of securing suitable Out of County provision for learners	The Local Authority is working closely with key colleagues to provide a local solution that is cost effective, and reduces the number of pupils travelling to and accessing already limited Out of County placements. However, the LA has a proven track record of working to secure appropriate placements for learners throughout the region.
The consultation process does not address stakeholder perspective and understanding of the proposal. Therefore, the proposal is not supported and does not progress.	Blaenau Gwent Council's Education Directorate are experienced in and have recently undertaken consultation upon proposals, whilst being fully compliant with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code (Version 2, 2018).
The proposal to expand the school is delivered late and/or over budget.	Delivery plans are in place and can be facilitated at pace in line with outcome of the statutory processes associated within this proposal i.e. consultation and statutory notice. Capital funding has been secured to deliver the proposal.
Insufficient capacity for future demand.	The purpose of this proposal is to build extra capacity to meet a previously unforeseen demand and to allow the Council to monitor and explore long-term options to secure sustainable growth.
The project capital/construction costs exceed the budget.	The site, services and facility are well known to the Blaenau Gwent Project team who built the school, and so the cost estimates are based upon actual knowledge and understanding, with contingency built in to address any potential unknowns. Budget monitoring is undertaken regularly, along with value engineering and change management processes.
Contributes high Carbon Dioxide (CO2) emissions.	Target cost effective low CO2 technologies that are compatible with the existing school technologies. Securing a localised solution will also reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

Delays and additional costs due to pandemic.	Comparable schemes are already under implementation and have informed the cost estimates for this proposal; therefore, cost implications associated with the pandemic are relatively well known.
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Benefits of Proposal

This proposal would ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils - particularly those with the greatest level of need, to be educated locally. The proposal further facilitates inclusion and an inclusive approach within Education, ensuring access to high quality specialist education facilities and support for children with disabilities within the Borough. It will also go some way to addressing the barriers parents perceive in accessing specialist education and reducing the Council's carbon footprint associated with travel for education purposes, but securing development on an existing school site.

Should nothing change, the Council will be unable to meet the needs of all learners particularly those with profound and multiple learning difficulties within Blaenau Gwent. Therefore, they would need to be placed Out of County at significant cost, with learners having to manage longer school journeys affecting families and socialisation for many pupils.

Expected Benefits and Advantages (when compared with the status quo):

- Creation of a local solution which will address the increased demand for special education provision
- Continuity and sustainability in terms of local education for learners with specialist and medical needs
- A local option for pupils transitioning from mainstream school, and resources bases
- Reduce the costs of out of county placements for learners, whilst securing local investment within the Blaenau Gwent school estate
- Improve access to and facilities for learners who meet the criteria for the specialist provision which Pen y Cwm offers
- Increased capacity and sustainability of placement
- Reduced travel time and carbon footprint

Disadvantages:

There are no disadvantages associated with this proposal.

Governance Model

There will be no changes to the existing governance model and structure within Pen y Cwm Special School.

Learner Travel Arrangements

The Council's Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy states that free home to school transport will be provided as follows:

The Council will provide transport assistance for pupils with ALN:

- if existing transport arrangements are deemed unsuitable in line with learners needs, alternative arrangements will be determined by the Inclusion Service;
- if it is not appropriate for the pupil to walk to school due to the nature of their additional learning need and/or disability; and/or,

- if it is determined by ALN Panel that there is no appropriate education provision within the County Borough suitable to meet pupil need.

The above arrangements will be subject to review in line with changes to circumstances relating to the pupil(s) transport requirements.

Pupils requiring Additional Learning Needs (ALN) transport who live:

- over 1.5 miles (for those under 8 years of age); and/or,
- over 2 miles (for those aged between 8-16 years of age)

from their nearest suitable ALN provision, will automatically qualify for free home to school transport. *Please note in instances where the school is a parental choice and not the provision determined by the ALN Panel, no transport will be provided.

The Council has established a process in order to assess the travel needs of children who may require ALN transport, as follows:

- All requests to ALN Panel for consideration of change of placement will firstly be considered by the Transport team to determine their eligibility for transport on distance grounds.
- The Council's ALN Panel will then consider the request for change of placement, and if agreed, determine the appropriate placement and identify if transport is required to access the agreed placement.
- If it is identified that transport is required, a Pupil Transport Request Form will be completed by the ALN team. The form will be returned to the Transport Officer within 5 working days of the Panel meeting taking place. The Transport Officer will then make the necessary arrangements and complete a journey risk assessment.
- Individual pupil risk assessment forms will only be completed if requested by a parent/carer, or if the pupil has needs that warrant completion of a form such as profound and multiple learning difficulties. The ALN team will coordinate completion of the form. The form will identify the pupils transport needs and the type of transport required.
- The Transport Team require 15 school days upon receipt of the Pupil Transport Request Form, in order to arrange transport.

Where transport has been agreed, the Transport Officer will contact the parent and inform them of the arrangements. In cases where transport requests are refused, parents/carers will receive notification from the ALN team, also indicating their right of appeal.

The current school location and infrastructure accommodates bus and taxi drop off and pick-up at the start and finish of the school day, with sufficient parking for staff and key partners to visit.

Section 4: Consultation Outcome and Next Steps

Consultation Report: Feedback from the consultation will be collated, analysed and presented in a Consultation Out-turn Report to the Council's Executive Committee in June 2021. The report will be available on the Council's website 2 weeks prior to a decision being made to proceed or not to proceed to statutory notice. Hard copies can be obtained on request via the email addresses detailed above.

Statutory Notice: Should this proposal be approved at Executive Committee; the Council will then go out to statutory notice in July 2021. The statutory notice period will run for 28 days, during this time, you will be able to make formal objections should you wish to do so, via the email

address provided in this consultation booklet. Any issues raised by interested parties will then be summarised and presented to the Executive Committee for a final decision to be made. Should the proposal proceed, a copy of the Statutory Notice will be displayed on the Council’s website and at Pen y Cwm Special School. Hard copies of the statutory notice will be available upon request.

Determination of the Proposal: Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council will determine the proposal based on the outcome of the statutory notice period. This may lead to the approval, rejection or approval of the proposal with modifications.

Decision Notification: Once a decision has been made, an electronic copy of determination will be sent out to all interested parties and published on Blaenau Gwent’s County Borough Council’s website within 7 days of the decision.

Figure 4 - The Statutory Process Timeline

April 2021	May 2021	June 2021	July 2021	August 2021	September 2021
Consultation Period					
		Consultation report to Executive Committee			
			Statutory Notice	Objections Report Decision Notification	
			Implementation September 2021		

Section 5: Details of Affected Schools



Pupil Place Data

The school’s capacity is currently 120, the Council. At present, there are more pupils with significant needs who require a place within Pen y Cwm, than there are places available.

There will be no direct effect on mainstream schools in the County Borough, neither will this proposal have any impact on The River Centre 3-16 Learning Community.

Section 6: Other Considerations

Finance

Revenue Costs

Pen Y Cwm Special School is funded in accordance with Blaenau Gwent Council's Fair Funding policy, and will receive resources on the same basis as any other school within Blaenau Gwent, based upon pupil numbers and the area of the school building. It is difficult to accurately project the costs associated within the capacity increase, due to the following variables: the reduction in funding for mainstream settings as a result of pupil placement, the level of cost avoidance as a result of pupil placement within Out of County settings from within Blaenau Gwent; and finally, the level of recoupment realised as a result of Out of County placement within Pen y Cwm School. Blaenau Gwent currently has 20 pupils that are educated outside the Local Authority at a cost of £896,000. As an example of the funding required in line with pupil placement, the current position (based upon 141 pupils) for 2020/21 was approximately £2.4 million (Age Weighted Pupil Unit and Category funding).

As the remodelling is proposed to take place within the existing footprint of the school, therefore, it is not anticipated that there will be any significant premises costs. There will be leadership implications, however, these are deemed to be relatively small based upon leadership pay scales which are reflective of the pupil population.

Capital Costs

There are capital financial implications associated with this proposal for the Council, which are circa £250,000. This will be met via contributions from within the Council's own resources.

Transport Costs

Costs associated with home to school transport are increasing. The transport costs associated with Out of County placement for 2019/20 were £134,000, whereas in 2020/21 and due to Covid-19, costs were in the region of £95,000. Pen y Cwm Special School transport costs for 2019/20 were £278,990 whereas for the 2020/21 academic year this rose to £292,000. These costs are regularly reviewed and subject to change in line with pupil placement.

Admission Arrangements

Admission to Pen y Cwm Special School is managed via the ALN Panel, which is made up of representatives from schools, the Inclusion Service and wider Education representatives. Referrals to the ALN Panel are made via the ALN Team.

Impact of the Proposal on the Welsh Language

This proposal does not impact upon the number and availability of Welsh-medium school places within Blaenau Gwent. The Council does not expect any negative impact on the Welsh Language as a result of this proposal. Welsh is taught in English-medium and Special Schools in line with the National Curriculum. The proposal will therefore have no impact upon the Welsh Language Measure (2011).

Equality Impact Screening

An Equality Impact Screening Assessment has been undertaken in order to assess the impact of key proposals and decisions upon protected characteristics. The assessment determined that none of the protected characteristics will be negatively affected, whilst disability will be positively affected (Please refer to **Appendix 2** for more information).

Community and Welsh Language Impact Assessment

A community impact assessment has been undertaken in order to assess the impact of key proposals and decisions upon stakeholders and the wider community (Please refer to **Appendix 3** for more information).

United Nation Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The Council in all its corporate responsibilities ensure that they will always engage positively with children and young people. If this proposal is implemented, it will realise benefits for children and young people in accordance with the seven core aims of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, specifically:

Core aim 1 - have a flying start in life;

Core aim 2 - have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities;

Core aim 3 - enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation;

Core aim 4 - have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;

Core aim 5 - are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised;

Core aim 6 - have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing; and

Core aim 7 - are not disadvantaged by poverty.

Engagement of Children and Young People in this Consultation

As part of this consultation process, the Education Transformation team in partnership with school, will consult with pupils that are affected by the proposal, as well as engaging with both the Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum and Schools Grand Council.

Capital Costs/Capital Receipts

Should the proposal be approved, it will address the current shortfall in capacity at Pen y Cwm Special School. There will be a capital costs associated with the proposal in facilitating the remodelling work within existing school building. No buildings will be transferred as a result of the proposal.

Housing Developments

On average over the course of the last 5 years, 90 houses have been built in Blaenau Gwent each year. This level of growth is expected to continue. These potential homes either already have planning permission, are seeking legal agreement or are included in the Local Development Plan. This is likely to have an impact upon pupil place planning. The Education Transformation team monitor the impact upon schools. Figure 2 - illustrates the number of housing Developments which are currently in the Local Development Plan (LDP)

	According the Housing Land Availability Study which looks at a 5-year timescale the following figures are identified for Tredegar Valley .					According the Housing Land Availability Study which looks at a 5-year timescale the following figures are identified for Ebbw Fawr Valley .					According the Housing Land Availability Study which looks at a 5 year timescale the following figures are identified for Ebbw Fach Valley .				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Housing Associations:	23	18	0	0		13	13	33	0		0	16	20	0	0

Private Sector Housing:	8	7	6	6		34	104	92	32		3	53	40	17	12
Total	31	25	6	6		47	117	125	32		3	69	60	17	12

For more information please visit the following webpage: <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/planning/local-development-plan/ldp-allocations/>

The above data tells us that there are over 472 housing development planned between 2020 – 2024. There is a potential for this to increase demand within both mainstream and special schools going forward.

Human Resources

There are no significant HR implications arising from the proposal. The proposed increase in pupil numbers will require the Governing Body of Pen y Cwm School to plan for the workforce requirements in readiness for the respective extension.

Organisational Development will provide advice, support and guidance to the Governing Bodies for the workforce planning and consequential recruitment processes. Where the Governing Bodies have adopted the Council’s School Redeployment and Redundancy Policy, any new vacancies arising as a consequence of an increase in numbers on the role will provide opportunities for school based staff on the school redeployment register.

Partnerships

The ‘Blaenau Gwent We Want’ engagement programme is about local people, businesses and organisations having a say on how we can improve Blaenau Gwent for our future generations.

In its 1st year the group have already engaged with over 1,500 people from throughout Blaenau Gwent to find out what they would like the area to be like in the future. Their feedback has been used to help us put together a number of priorities that we will work on over the next few years to help us create the Blaenau Gwent that we all want.

Our Well-Being Plan outlines our objectives for improving well-being in Blaenau Gwent and meeting our duties under the Future Generations Act (2015). The 5 objectives in the plan have been developed to reflect that Blaenau Gwent Wants....

- **The best start in life for everyone**
- **Safe and friendly communities**
- **To look after and protect the natural environment**
- **To forge new pathways to prosperity**
- **To encourage healthy lifestyles**

These well-being objectives are ones we consider to have real power to bring about change, that are the most urgent and that the evidence tells us need the combined force of the Public Services Board partners to deliver and improve well-being.

Section 7: Present Arrangements

ESTYN

Schools are inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose of an inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise standards achieved by their pupils (Estyn).

Pen Y Cwm Special School last Estyn inspection was undertaken in 2016. The results of which are tabled below:

Questions	Results
The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Good
Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	
Standards	Good
Wellbeing	Good
Key Question 2: How good is provision?	
Learning experiences:	Good
Teaching:	Good
Care, support and guidance:	Good
Learning environment:	Good
Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	
Leadership:	Good
Improving quality:	Good
Partnership working:	Good
Resource management:	Good

If a school is judged as adequate or unsatisfactory, they will be subject to monitoring by Estyn or the Local Authority until such time as they are judged to have made sufficient progress to be removed from the list of schools requiring improvement. Overall, this assessment is a good result for the school, only having 4 recommendations for improvements.

- **R1** Improve assessment for learning strategies to support pupils' learning throughout the school
- **R2** Make sure that target-setting is cohesive
- **R3** Improve the quality and consistency of reports to parents
- **R4** Make sure that staff performance management procedures are used consistently to inform improvements

Some of the comments from the inspection are below:

- Pupils make good progress in their learning in relation to their abilities and recognised needs
- There are highly effective arrangements to support pupils' health and wellbeing
- Pupils are offered a broad and balanced range of relevant learning experience within and beyond school
- Leaders and managers have strong commitment to school improvement

Quality and Standards in Education: The quality and standards of schools in Blaenau Gwent are monitored by the Council, in line with the national system of school categorisation and guidance in respect of schools causing concern. Estyn is the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales and is established under the 1992 Education Act. Standards and the quality of provision are also monitored periodically through the Estyn Inspection Framework for the inspection of schools.

Since 2012, the Council has commissioned the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to support school improvement in Blaenau Gwent's schools. The EAS provide school improvement support to the following Councils: Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen. As part of this proposal, the Council will work in partnership with the EAS to secure increased levels of support for the schools. This will ensure appropriate support is in place during the period of transition.

Standards: The proposal will not affect the standards in Pen y Cwm Special school. The school will continue to receive the appropriate level of challenge and support.

Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning: The provision of additional pupil places at is expected to enable more children to attend school in their local community. Pupil wellbeing is a priority for Pen y Cwm Special school which is monitored and reported. The proposal will not impact wellbeing and attitudes towards learning.

Teaching and Learning Experiences: The teaching at Pen y Cwm Special School will follow the national curriculum with English as the language of teaching and learning. The proposal will not impact the teaching and learning experiences.

Care, Support and Guidance: Pen y Cwm has highly effective policies and strategies for promoting care, support and guidance that have a strong emphasis on supporting pupils' behaviour, communication and emotional wellbeing. As a result, nearly all pupils behave well and engage enthusiastically in their learning. The school offers an appropriate range of activities that link well to pupils' interests and abilities. The school promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development effectively. The personal and social education programme provides pupils with valuable, age-appropriate information about a wide range of issues including sex and relationships, e-safety and personal hygiene. The programme helps pupils to develop their self-awareness and positive attitudes towards personal safety.

The school works closely with external agencies ensuring effective collaboration planning that will support and advise staff about individual pupils' needs. All pupils have an IEP and a majority have personal handling plans. However, the link between targets in plans is not always clear and the quality of IEP targets varies too much across the school. For example, not all IEPs have targets that are specific and measurable.

Leadership and Management: The headteacher has a clear vision and high expectations for the school there is clear and effective communication with governors, pupils, parents and staff. The senior leadership team are effective, understand their roles and responsibilities and undertake their work efficiently. All staff contribute to the positive ethos of providing high quality learning experiences in a caring environment. Generally, meetings provide suitable opportunities for all staff to contribute to the strategic direction of the school. There is a clear focus on improving outcomes through improved data tracking and the provision of rich and stimulating experiences for pupils.

Impact of the proposal

Should the proposal be approved, it will continue to provide a high quality learning environment in support of enhanced outcomes for all learners. The proposal will ensure that the already excellent standards will be maintained.

Much research and ALN reform has demonstrated that learners achieve better outcomes with they are fully engaged in learning and in an environment that is suitable for their needs.

Section 8: Overview of the Proposal

The table below details the category, language, age range and other relevant details relation to the proposed new school:

Capacity Proposal Overview	
Admission no and arrangements	Admissions to this school are co-ordinated by Blaenau Gwent's Inclusion team on the basis of need.
Age range	3-19 years
Pupil places	There are currently 141 pupils on roll as of March 2021, meaning that the school is over subscribed.
Capacity of the school	120 with the proposal to increase to 175 in September 2021
Location	Pen y Cwm Special School Strand Annealing Lane, Ebbw Vale, Blaenau Gwent NP23 6AN
Category school and language	Special School English-medium
Schedule of accommodation	To be determined post consultation
Transport arrangements and policy	Transport will be delivered in accordance with the Blaenau Gwent Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2020/21. Please refer to Section 1 for more information.
Cost per Pupil 2020/21	£16,925
School Categorisation (2019)	Green
Estyn Inspection Results	https://www.estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2020-08/Pen-Y-Cwm%2520Special%2520School.pdf
Building Condition Categorisation	A
Building Suitability Categorisation	B

School Catchment Area

The School catchment area of Pen Y Cwm Special School is all of Blaenau Gwent as the only special school that caters for pupils aged 3 – 19 with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. This will not change as part of this proposal.

Transition Arrangements

There will be no change for pupils, currently at the school.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question	Response
When would building work start?	If this proposal is approved the aim is to start the first phase of physical work on site during the latter part of the summer and autumn of 2021.
What about staff?	There should be no impact on staff as the school is simply extending its capacity. As pupil numbers increase in the future, however, there will be new opportunities and any new appointments to the staff structure would have to be approved by the Governing Body and the Council through the formal Organisational Development (OD) arrangements as is presently the case.
How safe will the pupils and staff be with the physical works? How will the school manage with all the noise and dust from the building work?	The Council has an exceptional record of coordinating the building of school buildings on “live” sites. The construction areas will be completely separate from the day to day operation of the school, with safety of the pupils and staff of paramount importance. Physical works will be phased in order to minimise disruption, with planned works taking place and in around the school day, and during holiday periods to ensure that there is no disruption for pupils.

Section 9: Consultation Pro-forma

Ysgolion a Cholegau yr 21ain Ganrif
21st Century Schools and Colleges



Consultation Questionnaire

Please provide your comment on the proposal to extend the Capacity for learners of Pen Y Cwm Special School <https://wh1.snapsurveys.com/s.asp?k=161701999055>

You may also wish to indicate which of the following reflects your views:

I fully support the proposal	
I do not support the proposal	

Your comments:

Name: _____ Date: _____

E-mail: _____

Address: _____ Postcode: _____

Please indicate if you are:

Primary: Teacher/Non-Teaching School Staff / Governor / Parent / Pupil /Local Resident / Other (please state) _____

Secondary: Teacher/Non-Teaching School Staff / Governor / Parent / Pupil /Local Resident / Other (please state) _____

Thank you for your time and contribution to the consultation. Your views, comments and responses will be recorded and reported to the Council's Executive Committee in the Consultation Outcome Report.

Please detach this form and return by Emailing: 21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

All comments to be received no later than 5:00pm on Sunday 6th June 2021

Appendix 1 - Distribution List for the Consultation Document

Parents (and where possible prospective parents) carers and guardians, and staff members of schools affected by the proposals	The Welsh Ministers
In the case of proposals affecting secondary provision, parents of pupils attending primary schools from which pupils normally transfer to that secondary school	Constituency and Regional Assembly Members (AMs) and Members of Parliament (MP's) representing the area served by/intended to be served by any school which is the subject of the proposals
The maintaining or proposed maintaining authority for any school likely to be affected by the proposals	ESTYN
Any other local authority (including those in England where appropriate) likely to be affected – including in the case of dedicated ALN provision, any authority placing or likely to place pupils with ALN in it to distribute to schools in their areas as appropriate	Teaching and staff trade unions (NUT; NASUWT; ATL; UCAC; UNISON; GMB) representing teachers and other staff at any school which is the subject of the proposals
The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authority for the area in which any school likely to be affected is located	The relevant Regional Education Consortium
Any other appropriate religious body for any school likely to be affected by the proposals	The Police and Crime Commissioner for the area served by/intended to be served by any school which is the subject of the proposals
The Governing body of any school which is the subject of the proposals	Any community or town council for the area served by/intended to be served by any school which is the subject of the proposals
The Governing body of other schools which the proposer consider are likely to be affected by the proposal;	In the case of proposals affecting nursery provision, any independent or voluntary providers who may be affected including Mudiad Meithrin. Also all Registered Private/Voluntary Early Years Settings /Providers in Blaenau Gwent;
In the case of proposals affecting nursery provision, the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships where present	In the case of proposals affecting ALN provision, any relevant health or third sector bodies with an interest
In the case of proposals affecting secondary provision, any further education institutions serving the area of the school (Coleg Gwent)	In the case of proposals affecting Welsh Language provision, the Welsh Language Commissioner

In addition to the above, the following are also included in the distribution:

The Headteacher of each school maintained by Blaenau Gwent LEA	Other Directorates of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
All Elected Members of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Blaenau Gwent Association of School Governors
The Careers Service	Libraries
RhAG (Parents for Welsh Medium Education)	SNAP Cymru

Appendix 2– Equality Impact Screening



Screening Form

Service Area Contact Information: <i>(Please complete all fields)</i>				
Name of Person Completing Form: <i>Sharon Northall</i>	Department/Service Area: <i>Education Directorate</i>		Service Manager: <i>Claire Gardner</i>	Date: <i>09/03/2021</i>
Contact Details: <i>sharon.northall@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk</i>			Name of Proposed Policy: <i>N/A</i>	
Policy Information				
Are you screening for the Equality Impact on a new policy, or an existing policy: <i>N/A</i> Choose an item.			Comments: This EIA screening is in connection with the proposal to increase capacity at Pen Y Cwm Special School along with changes to the school day.	
What are the aims and objectives of the policy: <i>There are no associated policy developments, however, the Council is consulting upon a proposal to increase Capacity of the Pen Y Cwm Special School within the Borough.</i>				
Assessment of Impact of the Policy / Practice on Protected Characteristics				
Protected Characteristic	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Neutral Impact	Provide reasons and any mitigation required
Age (children, young people, the elderly)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The remodelling works will ensure improved access to a high-quality, fully accessible teaching and learning environment, in line with 21st Century School standards, whilst also being DDA compliant. The additional facilities will ensure the health and safety of , along with improved wellbeing for a greater number of pupils in need of specialist provision.
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Pregnancy and Maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Religion and Belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Sex (male, female)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.

Additional Indicators of Equality Risk

Please indicate if you believe this policy / practice has a high, medium or low risk as follows (1 = No Impact; 2 = Minimal Impact; 3 = Potential Impact; 4 = Likely Impact; 5 = Inequality Impact)

Children and / or young people up to the age of 18	1	Please indicate any planned methods aimed at mitigating these risks Click here to enter text.
The dynamics of a given community	1	Please indicate any planned methods aimed at mitigating these risks There will be more options for parents to consider based on their child's schooling. English medium, Faith Based and Welsh-medium.

Meeting the Equality Objectives

Please indicate below if / how your proposal will contribute to the Equality Objectives

Objective 1 – Making equality vital in decision making and service provision	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Objective 2 – Be an equal opportunity employer, with a workforce that is aware of and understands the equality agenda	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Objective 3 – Do our best to engage, protect and support those people in our community that need it the most	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Objective 4 – Promote understanding and acceptance of diversity within our communities	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	

Evidence and Consultation

Have you undertaken any consultation and engagement activities with protected groups in order to mitigate any risks of discrimination	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Please describe the engagement activities undertaken as part of this process Formal consultation will be undertaken with all relevant stakeholders in order to gather their views.
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Please highlight any additional evidence which might demonstrate consideration of the needs to protected groups in relation to this particular proposal

Appendix 3 - Pen y Cwm Special School Community Impact Assessment

Community Impact Assessments are a structured way for the Council to fully understand the implications of our decisions and whether they are detrimental or discriminatory to certain groups or sections of the community. They help us to consider the impact of Council decisions and policies within and between communities more generally. The Community Impact Assessment process will ensure that our decision making process is robust and impacts on all communities within Blaenau Gwent ensuring that they are fully considered in Council decision making processes.

By carrying out impact assessments, the Council is working to promote equality for all our service users, employees and the wider community that we serve.

Pen y Cwm Special School is located in the Ebbw Fawr South Ward, the ward profile can be viewed by clicking on the following link: https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Council/Statistics_and_Data/Ebbw_Vale_South_Ward.pdf

Ebbw Fawr South Ward has several areas of deprivation according to the Welsh Index for Multiple Deprivation (2019)

<https://wimd.gov.wales/explore?lang=en#&domain=overall&z=12&lat=51.7770&lng=-3.2185>

Proposed Development

If approved the proposal would secure an additional 55 places for pupils requiring specialist education provision. The increase would bring significant benefits to current and new pupils to the school along with benefits for the wider community and families of pupils.

Proportion of Pupils:

The Council's proposal seeks to ensure a continued high quality learning environment for pupils in our special school, by extending the capacity of the school the Council will be able to cater for many of the Borough's learners who are/or would otherwise be placed Out of County in line with their needs and/or availability and sufficiency of pupil places. The school building is co-located with Ebbw Fawr Primary Learning Community Campus and Little Stars Pre-school within the Ebbw Fawr Valley. It is surround by lush green mountains and woodland, whilst also being located near to the Enterprise Zone. The school building is 9 years old.

There are approximately 19 pupils from outside the County Borough being educated at Pen y Cwm Special School. This represents 13% of the total school population with the majority of its pupils, residing within Blaenau Gwent. Future availability of places for "out of county" pupils will be subject to demand from within Blaenau Gwent in the first instance.

Current facilities and/or services offered

The following facilities are offered at Pen y Cwm School:

- Hydro pool
- ICT facilities
- Sensory Rooms
- Rebound Therapy Room
- Gym and Learning Bay
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication

- Specialist teaching areas such as: food technology rooms and art and craft room

The above provision/services will be not be affected by the remodelling work.

Travel Time

Given the proposal is to remodel the existing premises on its existing site there will be no impact on travel distances for existing pupils. As the catchment area covers the entire County Borough, the maximum distance likely to be travelled is no more than 8 miles, approximately 20 minutes by car/bus. Distances/travelling times will increase for those pupils with a placement from further afield.

How would parents' and pupils' engage should the proposal be agreed?

The Council recognises the importance of an effective and smooth transition process to ensure there is little if any disruption should the proposal to expand capacity at Pen y Cwm Special School be approved. The school will form part of the project team and will contribute to the overall development of the new provision.

Parents/carers and pupils will be provided with relevant information to aid their understanding of the proposal and the most appropriate support they can offer their children during the period of transition. The school will also work together with other services and where necessary, in identifying families who may need additional support. Parental and community engagement will remain a key priority throughout this process.

The wider implications the changes would have on public transport provisions.

The proposal is not expected to have any significant implications for public transport provision in the area given pupils' transport is largely provided by contracted vehicles.

Wider community safety issues.

The proposal would have no direct impact on the wider community for a building perspective;

- The school will remain in its current location.
- It will benefit families of pupils with profound or multiple learning difficulties by their child having the education within the County Borough within which they reside.
- Will provide designated spaces in the school for key partners such as health care professionals to offer individual support for learners.

No significant safety issues are anticipated.

What would be the impact on health and well-being?

As a special school, the focus is on children with complex specialist needs, so the proposal is expected to have a very positive impact on the health and wellbeing of those who attend, who will have access to the highest standard in terms of facilities, education and care.

Transport Impact Assessment

The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 places a duty on the council to assess the travel needs of learners under the age of 19. In addition to those children who qualify for free transport provision due to meeting the eligibility criteria, the council is under a legal obligation to assess the travel needs

28 | C o n s u l t a t i o n d o c u m e n t : P r o p o s a l t o i n c r e a s e c a p a c i t y n u m b e r s a t P e n y C w m S p e c i a l S c h o o l

of learners who walk to school. There will likely be an impact upon transport and travel, however, any implications on transport arrangements will be more positive than if the Council were to use provision from outside of the borough to meet the children's needs.

Staff Impact Assessment

There will be no impact on existing staff albeit the increase in capacity may provide new and different opportunities not available in a smaller school. Nevertheless, in addition to their role as statutory consultees, meaningful consultation will take place with any affected staff and recognised trade unions on the possible impact and outcome of the statutory consultation. Discussion will take place through agreed joint consultative processes with recognised trade unions (JCC) and collective consultation.

Additional Learning Needs Provision

This proposal specifically addresses sufficiency issues in relation to the number of places available for children with ALN in the Borough and will therefore, have a positive impact.



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Appendix 2 Consultee List

Parents (and where possible prospective parents) carers and guardians, and staff members of schools affected by the proposals	The Welsh Ministers
In the case of proposals affecting secondary provision, parents of pupils attending primary schools from which pupils normally transfer to that secondary school	Constituency and Regional Assembly Members (AMs) and Members of Parliament (MP's) representing the area served by/intended to be served by any school which is the subject of the proposals
The maintaining or proposed maintaining authority for any school likely to be affected by the proposals	ESTYN
Any other local authority (including those in England where appropriate) likely to be affected – including in the case of dedicated ALN provision, any authority placing or likely to place pupils with ALN in it to distribute to schools in their areas as appropriate	Teaching and staff trade unions (NUT; NASUWT; ATL; UCAC; UNISON; GMB) representing teachers and other staff at any school which is the subject of the proposals
The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authority for the area in which any school likely to be affected is located	The relevant Regional Education Consortium
Any other appropriate religious body for any school likely to be affected by the proposals	The Police and Crime Commissioner for the area served by/intended to be served by any school which is the subject of the proposals
The Governing body of any school which is the subject of the proposals	Any community or town council for the area served by/intended to be served by any school which is the subject of the proposals
The Governing body of other schools which the proposer consider are likely to be affected by the proposal;	In the case of proposals affecting nursery provision, any independent or voluntary providers who may be affected including Mudiad Meithrin. Also all Registered Private/Voluntary Early Years Settings /Providers in Blaenau Gwent;
In the case of proposals affecting nursery provision, the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships where present	In the case of proposals affecting ALN provision, any relevant health or third sector bodies with an interest
In the case of proposals affecting secondary provision, any further education institutions serving the area of the school (Coleg Gwent)	In the case of proposals affecting Welsh Language provision, the Welsh Language Commissioner

In addition to the above, the following are also included in the distribution:

The Headteacher of each school maintained by Blaenau Gwent LEA	Other Directorates of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
All Elected Members of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Blaenau Gwent Association of School Governors
The Careers Service	Libraries
RhAG (Parents for Welsh Medium Education)	SNAP Cymru

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EDUCATION DIRECTORATE BLAENAU GWENT

Pen y Cwm Special School
Consultation Session Overview

Date	Consultee Group	Numbers in Attendance
4.5.21	Joint Consultative Committee	7
5.5.21	Pen y Cwm Special School Staff	24
11.5.21	BGCBC Youth Forum	4
17.5.21	Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee	6
18.5.21	Pen y Cwm School Council	12
18.5.21	Pen y Cwm Special School Governing Body	9
27.5.21	Ebbw Fawr Headteacher Cluster	4
	Total	66

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EDUCATION DIRECTORATE BLAENAU GWENT

Consultation events: Increased Capacity of Pen Y Cwm Special School

JCC Meeting via Teams Tuesday 4th May 2:00pm via Microsoft Teams

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	How was the demand determined, and did it take into account the new ALN legislation? Do we anticipate this will be enough?	The proposal has 2 phases which seek to address both short-term and long-term demand. Yes, Inclusion have worked closely with the Education Transformation team in developing the proposal in consideration of ALN reform, trend data, projections/demand and the needs of pupils.
2	Will there need to be an increase in staff as a result of this proposal? If so, could staff at risk of redundancy be prioritised.	The Council has a proven track record of managing school organization proposals and will work with Trade Unions, Organisational Development and Pen y Cwm Special School to accommodate this request, should the need arise.

Pen y Cwm Special School Staff – Wednesday 5th May 3:45pm 2021 via Microsoft Teams

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Slightly concerned that there will be pressures on space, but the school are happy to work with the Council as we want what is best for our learners.	The Council welcomes the opportunity to work with the school to secure appropriate provision for both staff and learners going forward. Education have been working closely with the school's SLT to date, to identify the provision requirements.
2	Are the science and technology rooms being restored rather than being used as additional classrooms?	The proposal is to ensure that the specialist rooms can be effectively timetabled for learners as opposed to being used to house pupils. The Council is seeking to ensure additionality and prevent further loss in the short, medium and long-term.
3	What are the class sizes of the new proposed classrooms.	The classrooms will be developed in order to accommodate 10 -12 pupil's dependent on need etc. We will seek to achieve 56- 60 m2 in a special school.
4	The schools outdoor learning spaces fit the needs of the school now. With the additional numbers in the proposal, is there scope for more of EFLC outdoor space, as we don't want to impact on the teaching and learning for pupils outdoors?	The Council does not want to disadvantage the school, and understand that the outdoor learning space is used extensively by pupils. We will seek to ensure that the newly developed facilities are reflective of the number and needs of the pupils. There is scope for discussion with Ebbw Fawr.

	Question	Answer
5	What if the school is not ready for all pupils in September 2021?	A project group has already been established to manage the programme of works, with priorities determined in line with intake and delivery over the course of the next academic session.
6	A request to view the new layout was made by a staff member.	The Council will share the sketch scheme with staff via the Headteacher. A full set of drawings have not been produced yet for the first floor, as the project group are working on designation of spaces and associated requirements.
7	We currently have specialist provision for our existing 120 learnings, and there are no plans to enhance, just relocation. This is a perfect opportunity for more provision to be considered with more space for learners so that they don't have to make do.	There are plans to enhance provision by remodeling unsuitable spaces. The proposal has two parts, both of which will seek to maximize opportunities for the school to enhance provision.
8	With the restrictions as a result of COVID-19 the school is already without some of its provision, such as soft play and hydrotherapy pool .	The Council is aware of the restrictions and the impact upon the school, hence why this proposal seeks to add capacity in the short-term, whilst also committing to long-term sustainable development.
9	I share some of my colleagues concerns. We are a special school providing specialist provision for learners who are already under great pressure for space, what spaces is there in the building as a whole?	The Council fully appreciates the concerns and does not underestimate the impact of continued growth and demand. The short-term plan is to focus on the remodeling and transformation of spaces within the existing school footprint, inclusive of shared spaces with Ebbw Fawr Learning Community, which is time critical. There have been extensive discussions with the other building users to determine availability of space. However, we have to consider sustainability, accessibility, infrastructure, technical implications etc. when exploring additional spaces and areas, along with pupil projections at EFLC Primary Phase.
10	What are the medium to long-term options?	A number of these options have been highlighted within the options appraisal as per the presentation. These options are being explored further as all have associated implications such as the requirement to secure planning approval etc.
11	Will learners have an opportunity to feed in to the consultation?	Absolutely, we intend to engage with pupils as part of the consultation process and beyond. Learner voice is an extremely important part of the process and proposal.

Youth forum Meeting via Teams Tuesday 11th May 6:00pm via Microsoft Teams

No questions

Scrutiny Group Monday 17th May 2021 2:00pm via Microsoft Teams

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	You say there are 20 Out of County (OCC) placements, will all be accommodated internally now in Blaenau Gwent with this proposal?	The Council are anticipating a reduction in OCC placements, which is presently subject to review in line with the needs of each learner.
2	In the short-term the works to the school will accommodate some growth. However, what is the long-term answer?	The options presented within the presentation will be explore in more detail over the course of the next few months including, extension, co-location, along with a potential new build. A more detailed options appraisal will be developed over the course of the next few months to determine the most suitable course of action in the medium to long-term. This will be subject to a further report to ensure that members are updated in relation to progress.
3	Will there be plans in the medium to long-term to accommodate the needs of OCC placements in Borough?	It is in the best interest of Blaenau Gwent learners to take this approach in the long-term, seeking to reduce placement based upon provision by ensuring that Blaenau Gwent has sufficient specialist provision for our learners. However, there will be individual cases whereby OCC placement is the most suitable option.
4	What is the timeline?	The proposal is subject to consultation and associated statutory processes in line with the School Organisation Code (2018), with these processes scheduled to conclude - subject to political approval, at the start of the autumn-term for implementation from September 2021. Part 1 is scheduled to conclude at the end of the 2021/22 academic session. Part 2 will be progressed simultaneously, with an options appraisal to assess medium to long-term development drafted by the end of the autumn-term, to inform implementation plans and associated timelines from 2022 onwards.
5	How will the tendering contracts work? Will this be done in house?	The detailed design development and minor works packages will be developed and managed by Technical Services, along with the associated tender processes.
6	What are the next steps?	The Council is encouraging all consultees to formally respond as per the presentation. The consultation process is scheduled to conclude on Sunday 6 th June 2021. An out-turn report will then be produced and via Executive Committee for a determination.

No questions

Pen y Cwm Special School Governing Body Meeting Tuesday 18th May 2021 at Pen y Cwm

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	What is your definition of long-term?	The Council consider anything between 1-3 years as short-term, medium-term 3-5 years and long-term, 6 plus years.
2	We would like the commitment from education, that development in the medium to long-term will be a priority for the school.	The Council is absolutely committed to the medium to long-term development, with discussions around a more detailed options appraisal programmed for the summer term. This will be developed in partnership with the school.
3.	There has to be thought around the wellbeing of learners and staff.	The wellbeing of staff and learners is of paramount importance in relation to all aspects of this proposal. Continued consultation with staff and learners will be a key focus throughout the delivery phase – should the proposal proceed. The Education Transformation team have a track record of delivery on live school sites. The project would be programmed and managed to ensure that there is minimal disruption and impact upon both staff and pupils.
4	Is there a financial commitment from Welsh Government for the proposal?	The Council proposes to use a proportion of the WG Capital Maintenance Grant, along with our own minor works budget to deliver the first part of the proposal
5	Would the school see the increase in pupils this September of after the work has been completed?	Admission to Pen y Cwm is managed via the Inclusion team and ALN Panel arrangements. The team are working closely with the school to determine and manage place availability. The demand will factor into the project planning processes.
6	We have some concerns that already Pen y Cwm has lost its identity as the signage in reception clearly states EFLC? Also, there is more space allocated to the primary phase than they need while we are stretched for space.	The Council has been working with Pen y Cwm Special School to seek to resolve the issues in relation to signage etc., and will continue to do so. In determining the availability of space within the co-located primary school setting, pupil projections, the configuration of the teaching and learning environment, along with suitability of this space needs to be considered. There are also sustainability and technical implications associated with this.

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
7	What is the timeline?	The delivery of part one of the proposal will take place over the course of the next academic session. The medium to long-term plans will be progressed concurrently, as detailed in answer to the first question raised.
8	There is some genuine excitement about the proposal by staff, however, you cannot take away the tools that make this a special school with specialist provision.	Both the short-term and medium to long-term proposals seek to address the specialist provision which has been lost, whilst also ensuring that opportunities for additionality are maximised. There have been discussions around opportunities with external partners in the health sector, which are currently in the early stages of development. We will ensure that the proposals are aligned and come back to discuss the opportunities with governors when there is more certainty. In addition, we will be looking to produce a more detailed appraisal of the long-term options by the end of the autumn-term.
9	With the current trend of pupil numbers increasing, what happens if we reach our upper limit with the year?	Then the medium, long-term development will need to be brought forward for earlier consideration by the Project group. There is a piece of research being undertaken regionally which will inform future developments.
10	I am concerned about the financial aspect, will this impact on the schools budget?	The Council is confident that there will be a minimal impact on the school in line with the delivery of part one of the proposal, as detailed within the consultation document. We will continue to work with and support the school in this respect, and remain committed to the provision, which is a priority for the Education Directorate.
11	The longer the decision to extend is left, the costs could escalate meaning the work would not be completed. Have you considered using a modular classroom?	The Council has sought to move away from using demountable units as an option, like many other Councils in Wales. We have an experienced team who will ensure that the capital costs are identified and effectively managed in the medium to long-term.
12	There are some concerns that should there be an Estyn Inspection now, the school would be de-categorised from a green school through no fault of their own.	Welsh Government are reviewing their categorisation model, we will work with the school via the Project team to ensure that the facilities are fit for purpose and reflective of the schools needs and specialist nature.

Ebbw Vale Headteachers Cluster meeting Thursday 27th May 2021 2:00pm via Microsoft Teams

	<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Will the extended places be implemented in September 2021?	The first phase of the work will be in order to accommodate the September intake, with the remaining remodelling works – subject to approval, scheduled for delivery over the course of the next academic session.
2.	With the extra 55 spaces and the potential 20 out of county placements, will there still be sufficient capacity to support the increased demand?	A review of out of county placements will need to be undertaken in the first instance in line with the needs of these pupils. The situation is being monitored very closely by the Inclusion team and the associated Project Group, who will need to monitor the projections and requests to inform the project development and delivery phase, along with medium to long-term developments.

Name of Consultation: Pen y Cwm Consultation

Log of Correspondence



	Date	Query/comment	Actioned
1	13.5.21	Correspondence (Email): I can't see anything contentious that would affect schools in our cluster. I fully support extending capacity at PYC	Recorded
2	18.5.21	Correspondence (Email): I fully support extending the capacity – I believe it is what is needed in BG.	Recorded
3	18.5.21	Correspondence (Email): I have no questions about extending the capacity of PYC; just a comment. I fully support extending the capacity of this provision.	Recorded
4	18.5.21	Correspondence (Email): I agree, full support from me.	Recorded
5	18.5.21	Correspondence (Email): I fully support extending capacity at PYC, We need that facility in BG.	Recorded
6	20.5.21	Correspondence (Email): I support all the comments made by my colleagues and strongly believe that the provision and the extension of its capacity is vitally important.	Recorded
		Local Authority Response: The Council welcomes the supportive comments and views shared by the above consultees.	
7	28.5.21	Correspondence (Email): As a cluster we understand and support the need for the expansion of Pen Y Cwm due to the increased need for special school placements. We agree that option 5 works best in terms of an immediate solution, however do feel that we need to give consideration to an extension, building another school if needed or relocating to a school with surplus capacity in the longer term. We hope that the expansion of Pen Y Cwm will support the development of inclusion to ensure that pupils have suitable placements from the start of their education. The changes to shared space in the bistro and the loss of the staffroom for Ebbw Fawr Primary Phase will have little impact in the short term. However, we are mindful that in future should EF numbers increase that a two form entry structure for each year can no longer be accommodated as one of the current classrooms will become a staffroom to allow the increased space for Pen Y Cwm. If numbers increase, then this change will need to be revisited to allow for a two form entry capacity.	Recorded

		<p>Local Authority Response:</p> <p>The Council welcomes the views and support expressed by the Ebbw Fawr Cluster, and is mindful of both the pupil projections and associated impact upon both schools. The aforementioned considerations have heavily influenced the development of this proposal. The medium to long-term solution will seek to ensure sustainability for both parties going forward, in terms of growth and development.</p>	
8	28.5.21 14:52pm	<p>Correspondence (Email):</p> <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>RE: Proposal to extend the capacity at Pen y Cwm Special School</p> <p>Following careful consideration of the consultation document, I wish to make comments on the preferred options indicated. I write by email, as I believe the survey sheet limits the options available to me.</p> <p>I do not support the proposal as is presented in the consultation document. (Option 5)</p> <p>Whereas, I fully support the need to expand the capacity of Pen-y-Cwm Special School and applaud the good work of all staff, pupils and families over the years, I truly believe that to:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>remodel the existing school site in order to create an additional 55 places, within the existing footprint of Pen y Cwm Special School...</i></p> <p>is not the correct course of action, but I do agree that the authority should be:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>working on the development of a long-term plan to secure additional capacity to facilitate sustained growth and development...</i></p> <p>and this should be the priority at this time.</p> <p>From experience, I know that the short term fix will remain the long term outcome and, as priorities change, the chance to revisit this will be overtaken by the needs of other facility development in the years to come.</p> <p>Opinion</p> <p>Option 5 – Initially a long awaited, but short term catch up, quick fix with further limiting consequences for long term development and sustainability, led by a financial argument and projected numbers. It is clearly the cheapest positive option, but shows the LA has a predetermined outlook, uncertain commitment for future development that is prepared to limit potential support to an expanding and required facility, that will lack room to continue to support pupils with ever changing needs as they grow. This is a short term fix that will need fixing again.</p> <p>Observations</p> <p>As I have witnessed over the last 30 years, remodelling has often been the short term action taken at previous sites for this school. It has also been a temporary fix in many other BG schools in that time, but especially in the last 10 years with significant and detrimental short term impact, lacking the long term improvement as hoped for.</p> <p>Bringing back OOC pupils is a priority, for the wellbeing of both children and families, and economic sense within budget constraints. Providing much needed specialist facilities for SEN and ALN pupils across Gwent is also needed, as many SEN schools in Gwent do not support physical need to the same extent.</p> <p>Squeezing in extra provision on the current site would be detrimental to the goals of the school, staff, pupils and community it serves. Having more pupils on the limited site in the same space would affect pupil interaction, especially the stability and wellbeing of pupils across this ALN/SEN provision, especially</p>	Recorded

those with ASD, behavioural, medical and physical needs, and social disparity. Having less space per pupil in this Special School will advertently affect the children it is trying to support, even in the short term.

The current proposal also admits that this recently new school site, whilst being so needed, was obviously not suitable for any future development of this expanding, developing provision from the start. Within a decade of its existence, it is already too small and limited by its site and location. This expansion is not necessarily a result of its success, but an indicator of increasing need across SE Wales, not provided for in other boroughs.

The adaption of specialist practical classroom areas to increase standard provision limits curriculum options and interests for pupils with technical ability is a concern. Compromising crafting, food technology, and physical activity areas will continue to affect progress of pupils that require and enjoy these life skills. Science and Technology remain separate disciplines. More room is needed for practical activity and opportunity.

Pupil places

The numbers indicated in the consultation document are confused. Were only 3 classrooms and supporting facilities asked for by the school's staff and senior management team?

It is understood that current provision is 120 based on original design. Although capacity of 150 is suggested, 141 are on roll, 19 are from OOC. Does this mean that 21 pupils are being accommodated in corridors?

There seems to be 2 possible ways of looking at this:

- This average class size is currently 8, (typically 10) allowing for sufficient supporting staff, but individual needs fluctuate and supported needs can change dramatically. So, increasing provision from 120 to 175 should equate to 55 extra places as per the original design of this new building. This would mean an average of at least 6 or 7 extra classrooms and services, breakout areas, support areas and required facilities are needed. With some classes with only 5 pupils in it, this would suggest 11 extra rooms and support facilities are needed, not 3.
- If teaching and support space is sufficient for current numbers, increasing capacity from 141 to 175 would be a planned increase of 34 on roll. This equates to at least 4 classrooms, not 3. Again, with some supported classes of only 5 pupils, many having wheelchairs and require extra space and support at present, it is obvious that 7 classrooms and associated facilities would be required, not 3.

Following in the reported and continuing upward trend, increasing numbers of pupils and staff will also require increasing travel and transport arrangements, drop-off points, staff parking, long term family waiting areas and specialist pickup points within the already limited site.

Remodelling the school to adequately accommodate the oversubscribed 21 pupils already on role should be essential before September, but arguing this could be done for 55 extra places on the current site with appropriate facilities, on a strictly limited budget and within the timescale is ludicrous and unimaginable.

In Summary

Option 2 must be the recommended option here. It may not be the cheap, short term fix wanted by officers, but it provides scope for facilities that allow pupils space and support for staff that can encourage pupils **to be resilient and independent and to develop skills to reach their potential**, the aim of any good school. It also bolsters the borough's reputation showing a real commitment to the ALN community, long term investment for the region and visible, physical support for the school, staff and pupils.

Maybe, changing the unused housing allocation of the land adjacent would also provide more suitable expansion possibilities for long term development of the currently "hemmed in" school facilities and even playing/sporting areas for both schools, something clearly lacking in the past development of EFLC sites.

With regards to the financial aspect, I note that 20 out of county pupils cost approximately £890,000, whilst 19 OOC pupils bring in approximately £522,000. Therefore, since this means an annual cost saving of above £350,000, this could equate to £3.5m over a 10-year development planning period,

enough to justify long term expansion with projected numbers. (Again, the reports are confused as the consultation document states that transport costs for OOC was actually £134,000 (£95,000 in 20/21 due to Covid-19), but the other £200,000 is unaccounted)

Lastly, I suggest that the image showing the whole shared building on P5 should be changed as to those who do not know the area, it gives a false impression of the school's size. A layout of the present building would also help interested parties to consider the potential for remodelling before considering the best course of action.

I trust that these comments and opinions are added to the consultation for consideration.

Local Authority Response:

The Council is proposing to take a two-phased approach to the development of Pen y Cwm, and as such, has had to work with the school to find a suitable solution to address short-term growth, whilst also being fully committed to the development of a medium to long-term solution. The short-term growth proposal has not been chosen due to cost, but due to the fact that it will allow for expansion in line with the current projections via the remodelling of key areas, to improve suitability and create additionality. In addition, it can be programmed, managed and delivered within the required timeframe without significant constraints which have the potential to delay the process.

Option 2 will certainly be explored as a medium to long-term solution, but will have a more extensive timeline due to the associated implications such as design development, drainage design, planning etc. A change of use in terms of the land adjacent to Pen y Cwm will be explored as part of the medium to long-term planning process. The longer term financial impact of the growth model will be determined as part of this process. The consultation document had been published prior to this response being received, therefore, it was not possible to change the images.

All responses to the consultation process are presented and considered as part of the Council's decision making processes.

4.6.21



4.06.21 Estyn

response to the pro



4.06.21 Estyn

response to the pro

Local Authority Response:

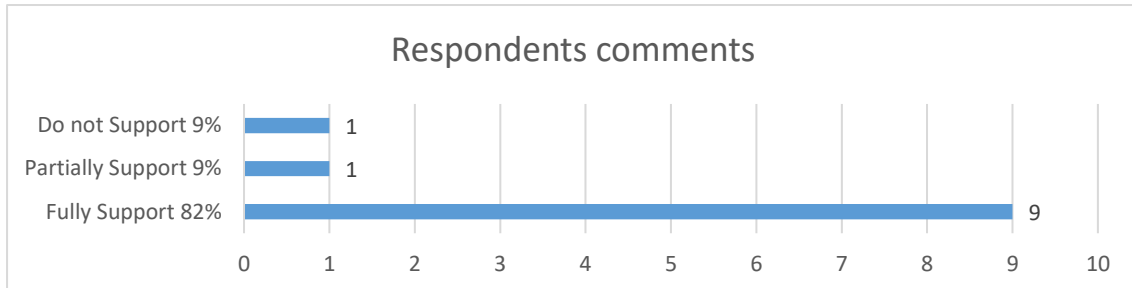
Please refer to paragraphs 2.1- 2.3 of the report.

Recorded

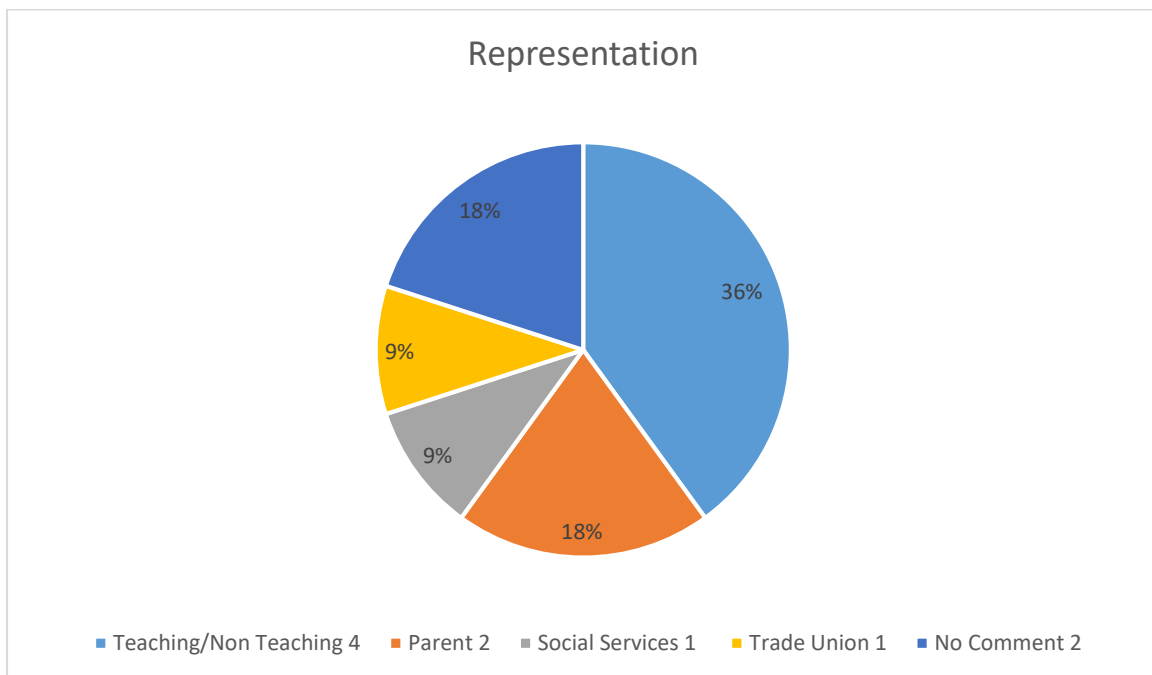
Pen Y Cwm Consultation

This Summary report was generated on 07/06/21.

Overall 11 respondents completed this questionnaire. The report has been filtered to show the responses for 'All Respondents'.



The breakdown of which can be found below



Comments captured are as follows:

Support

- There is a definite need for an increase in this specialist provision.
- When you say relocate the post 16, do you mean to another location within the school please?
- This is truly needed to make Pen Y Cwm school continue with the brilliant work we do with our pupils. There is a high demand for SEN places in Blaenau Gwent, our pupils should not have to travel out of county just to get an education. We also need more outdoor space for things such as an outdoor gym, grass area for sports and vocational activities!

- Pen y Cwm is a valuable part of Blaenau Gwent and its community. We need to have the facilities to provide wrap around support for the pupils of the county with ALN. Pupils having to travel out of County prevents them from establishing networks with their peers in their community. Facilities need to be increased at the existing school that MUST include more outdoor provision for pupils of all mobility's but there is a significant need for space for vocational opportunities for Post 16 to enable them to progress with skills that will have a positive impact when moving into the adult sector.
- I work in a mainstream school within the Borough and fully support the proposal to increase capacity at Pen Y Cwm. We have so many children who need specialist support in mainstream schools, where their needs are far greater than we can meet and there currently is just not enough provision to ensure they're getting the opportunities to succeed that they are entitled too. I feel like this, and the implementation of the ALN bill will benefit our learners with and IDP profoundly, increasing standards and ensuring that the children who need this specialist support get it.
- There is a huge demand for ALN placements, so we need to expand due to the required increase in levels of pupils. In order to still offer a wide and varied curriculum going forward specialist's rooms need to be doubled due to increased pupil numbers and demand for these rooms. We will need extra outdoor space for teaching and for exercise. In this climate a big emphasis has been put on outside, we currently don't have enough space for the pupils we have at break and lunchtime. Outdoor gym area for key stage 4 and post 16 is necessary to improve fitness and mental wellbeing. Outdoor seating for lunchtime so pupils can eat lunch and socialise. A new post 16 common room as the existing one was made into a classroom. large outdoor equipment for improvement of gross motor skills. Space for vocational courses to be run to give our pupils more opportunities.
- This is greatly needed within Blaenau Gwent. There are a number of children with additional needs that need the specialist support that Pen Y Cwm could offer. Pen Y Cwm provides such a positive environment for the children with additional needs and supports them in to adulthood.
- At present pupils eat lunch in their classrooms; these are individually pre-plated and foiled. If this format is to continue then the increase in the number of classes is going to impact the delivery of meals both in the time allocated and food quality (temperature etc.).

Partial Support

- General response from the members we represent is positive and we understand that staff and learners welcome the changes to capacity. We are however concerned about the implications to available space within the existing footprint of the building. Specifically loss of:- Learning Bay Science and Technology room Library Thrive/TIS room Independent living 'flat' MDT/Conference Room Outdoor gym Outdoor learning/teepee type sensory activity spaces Storage for wheelchairs/standing frames/large equipment etc. Post 16 common room PPA room Softplay space for younger children Designated physiotherapy room Gestural control immersion room. We understand that the learning spaces lost in the immediate term following any capacity changes would significantly reduce the wider/specialist activity

crucial to a special school curriculum. Staff also have concerns about the severely limited outdoor space – ALN learners need large outdoor spaces for structured and unstructured play opportunities and this is of paramount importance post Covid-19. We would ask the authority to consider the spare classroom capacity at Ebbw Fawr Learning Community Primary. It is vital that the authority is mindful that the proposed increase in capacity does not detrimentally impact on the specialist provision at the site.

Do not support

- My child currently attends pen y cwm, i am concerned on how building work will impact on him while he is attending school and coping with things in school changing place i.e. toilets. Also concerned of where the post 16 base will be relocated

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Pen y Cwm Consultation - Thematic Analysis

The primary themes arising from the analysis of responses including: social media and face to face engagement; written, email and survey correspondence are detailed below. The frequency of reference to each theme (from the most to the least prevalent) is also noted:

Theme	Frequency
<p>Specialist Provision – A high proportion of consultees - particularly staff and Governor’s highlighted the need to maintain existing specialist facilities, whilst also looking to enhance and increase this provision within the school. There were concerns that the proposed increased capacity would be to the detriment of the specialist areas which the school has been recognised and commended for by Estyn and other. This provision is important to maintaining the specialist nature of the school.</p>	17
<p>Increased Demand – Consultees recognised the significant increase in demand for specialist provision over the course of the last 4-5 years in particular. The need to the need to address the increased demand in both the short and long-term was a persistent them within the responses received.</p>	16
<p>Sustainability – This theme relates the need to consider long-term sustainability of provision in responding to the increasing levels of demand. Respondents were concerned about the fragility of the medium-term situation in line with increased placement requests. Consultees where seeking assurance around the Council’s long-term commitment to the proposal.</p>	15
<p>Space – Respondents highlighted their concerns regarding spatial constraints within the existing footprint of the school building, which have been exacerbated in recent years by increasing pupil numbers. There is a dependency between this theme and that of specialist provision, which has been restricted and lost in the past due to the limitations upon the availability of space. These concerns relate to increased provision and its impact upon internal and external facilities, for which demand will increase i.e. the outdoor gym, hydro pool, science and technology and life skills areas.</p>	14
<p>Growth – There was recognition among respondents of growth which had taken place over the last 10 years within the pupil population, along with the need to support continued growth into the future. There was support for growth and development of the school and associated provision.</p>	10
<p>Wellbeing – There were strong views on learner and staff wellbeing being monitored managed and maintained throughout the short to medium-term planning process. This theme also related to supporting the development of local specialist provision for Blaenau Gwent Learners.</p>	5

Out of County – There was recognition of the need to reduce out of county placement made due to availability of provision.	5
Opportunities – Consultees felt that there are opportunities to enhance and further develop provision that should be maximised by both short and long-term aspects of the proposal.	4
Stability – There was a feeling that Pen y Cwm requires a sustainable solution to increase stability for staff and learners alike.	3

Views and Comments Captured via Social Media

- I'm a Pen y Cwm parent and this is the first I've heard of this
- Me too but why would the school tell parents about it: 'Our kids are only attending there'
- Wonderful that many more children & young people will benefit from this amazing provision with the most dedicated staff. Diolch Pen y Cwm & Diolch BGCBC
- Amazing news for these children, my son is currently in the process of receiving a statement of education. Unfortunately, there doesn't appear to be a school within the Borough to meet his needs. He's not 'Complex' enough to fit the ALN placements suggested but its such a horrendous battle to ensure the LA enable him to be adequately supported in mainstream. The School is amazing but there's just no money in BG. If you don't have a diagnosis of ASD, but have Learning Difficulties – you fall under the 'Complex Needs' umbrella. It would be lovely if the LA could explore where children with no complex needs but who need significant extra support in their learning could be educated to the standard that every child deserves.
- Fantastic news
- Wonderful news
- Great news for the community
- Amazing news my son goes there and has come on so much in every way possible best decision I ever made was putting him there.
- Problem is if they increase capacity they need to increase qualified staff sufficiently.
- Fantastic news

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