

**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

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

**SUBJECT:** **EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE – 15<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2020**

**REPORT OF:** **DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT  
OFFICER**

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**PRESENT:** COUNCILLOR H. TROLLOPE (CHAIR)

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

**Co-opted Member**

A. Williams

**Executive Member – Education**

Councillor J. Collins

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

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

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Collier and L. Parsons.</p> <p><b><u>Co-opted Member</u></b> T. Baxter</p>	
No. 3	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>The Chair and Councillors J.C. Morgan and T. Smith declared an interest in Item 5 – Welsh-medium Education Consultation Proposal / Cynnig ymgynghori ar addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg.</p>	
No. 4	<p><b><u>EDUCATION &amp; LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>The Minutes of the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2020 were submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><b><u>Summary of inspection outcomes for Educational Establishments – autumn term 2019 and spring term 2020</u></b></p> <p>In relation to the above item a Member requested that his question regarding Brynmawr Foundation School, be included in the Minutes to show scrutiny challenge. The report read:-</p> <p>“In a majority of lessons, pupils of all abilities generally do not make enough progress. They do not recall or use prior learning well enough, nor do they develop their skills sufficiently, particularly in literacy and numeracy. This is an important shortcoming.”</p>	

	<p>The Member wanted assurances that Brynmawr Foundation School were engaging in professional learning with other schools and other organisations.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
	<p><b><u>VERBAL UPDATE - COVID-19 PANDEMIC</u></b></p> <p>At the request of the Chair, the Corporate Director of Education provided a verbal update on the COVID-19 Pandemic.</p> <p>Blaenau Gwent, across the whole of the school estate had moved to remote learning from the 10<sup>th</sup> December. The decision was not taken lightly and feedback from Headteachers was that remote learning was working well, with learners continuing to be engaged.</p> <p>A Welsh Government directive was issued around two aspects of provision. The first aspect, vulnerable learner provision, he felt the Authority were in a secure position in relation to vulnerable learner provision as there was strong provision in place to support learners that were Children Looked After and those learners that were on the Child Protection Register whose families may require support.</p> <p>The second aspect of the directive was around key worker childcare provision prior to the Christmas break. A special Headteachers meeting had been held and they had agreed that a communication be sent out to parents for them to advise of any childcare requirements that maybe needed for Thursday and Friday this week. It had been made clear that this should only be as a last resort due to learners being safer within home settings. The Director advised Members that the Authority was responding to the directive.</p> <p>The officer continued, that Headteachers and the Council were working towards the 4<sup>th</sup> January start to the new term and were anticipating further information from the Welsh Government in terms of expectations for provision for the spring term for schools.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding the Welsh Government's announcement around testing all pupils in schools. The</p>	

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

The Committee AGREED this course of action.

Councillor M. Cook left the meeting at this juncture.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The sets of projections were:-

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

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

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

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

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

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	<p>throughout the school estate. Monthly meetings were held with the Planning Department to look at developments and the impact upon schools and look to address where there were financial viability issues for developers and also whether or not there was sufficient capacity within schools to accommodate the pupils. The Officer suggested that she could provide a report for a future meeting to provide detail on how the Directorate worked around Section 106 developments to incorporate them into pupil place planning and within strategic schools organisation processes.</p> <p>A Member commented that he welcomed the review of the catchment areas as he felt it would help alleviate issues with sufficiency issues in some schools and help to reassess the pupil numbers that were required in different schools.</p> <p>In relation to Section 106 a Member raised concerns around new developers and their contributions. He felt it was important to ensure that all developers contribute fairly and that Section 106 agreements continued.</p> <p>The Director of Education referred to the Forward Work Programme and reports on the review of capacity at Pen-y-Cwm Special School and Section 106 Agreements would be presented to a Special meeting of the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report be accepted.</p>	
<b>No. 9</b>	<p><b><u>EDUCATION ICT - INFRASTRUCTURE CONNECTIVITY PROJECT</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise progress in relation to the ICT - Infrastructure Connectivity Project (ICP). In addition, the report would provide an overview of the Welsh Government's Hwb EdTech Programme and its alignment with the Blaenau Gwent ICP.</p> <p>The Education Transformation Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p>	

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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