



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMITTEE SUMMONS

C Hanagan
Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
The Pavilions
Cambrian Park
Clydach Vale CF40 2XX

Meeting Contact: Claire Hendy - Senior Democratic Services Officer (01443 424081)

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a meeting of **HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held at the **Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX** on **TUESDAY, 19TH NOVEMBER, 2019** at **5.00 PM.**

Non Committee Members and Members of the public may request the facility to address the Committee at their meetings on the business listed although facilitation of this request is at the discretion of the Chair. It is kindly asked that such notification is made to Democratic Services by Friday, 15 November 2019 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

AGENDA

**Page
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1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

To receive disclosures of personal interest from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct

Note:

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject matter that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest: and
2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of a prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave.

2. MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the previous meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee which was held on 24th September 2019

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REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATIONS

3. INFORMATION REPORTS

N.B. Reports for Information can be found on our Scrutiny webpage by accessing the following links:

- [Annual Complaints Report](#)
- [Cwm Taf Safeguarding Annual Report 2018-19](#)

(For Members to acknowledge the information contained within this/these report(s) but any queries relating to the item can be directed to Scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk)

4. REVIEW OF THE HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

To review the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

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5. CONSULTATION LINKS

Information is provided in respect of relevant [consultations](#) for consideration by the Committee.

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

6. AUTISM REPORT (NOTICE OF MOTION)

To receive an overview of what the Council provides to support its residents living with Autism.

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REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES

7. TACKLING EMPTY HOMES

To review the progress made in implementing the Council's approach to Tackling empty Homes, which is set out in the Empty Homes Strategy for the period 2018-2021

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8. COMMUNITY HUBS PROGRESS REPORT

To consider the report in respect of progress made with regards to the Community Hubs Programme..

9. URGENT ITEMS

To consider any items, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Circulation:-

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
(County Borough Councillor R Yeo and County Borough Councillor G Holmes
respectively)

County Borough Councillors:

Councillor A Roberts, Councillor M Forey, Councillor J Davies, Councillor J Williams,
Councillor P Howe, Councillor G Stacey, Councillor M Tegg, Councillor G Hughes,
Councillor D Owen-Jones, Councillor C Willis, Councillor W Jones and
Councillor E Griffiths

County Borough Councillor G Hopkins, Cabinet Member for Adult & Children's
Community Services

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 24 September 2019 at 5.00 pm at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park. Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

County Borough Councillors - Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor R Yeo (Chair)

Councillor G Holmes	Councillor A Roberts
Councillor M Forey	Councillor J Davies
Councillor J Williams	Councillor P Howe
Councillor M Tegg	Councillor G Hughes
Councillor D Owen-Jones	Councillor C Willis
Councillor W Jones	Councillor E Griffiths

Officers in attendance:-

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr G Isingrini, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor S Evans and Councillor G Hopkins

9 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

10 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 9th July 2019 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

11 Cabinet & Scrutiny Engagement

Members were reminded that at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny held on the 22nd January 2018 Members agreed to receive Cabinet Members at future Scrutiny meetings on a quarterly basis to present relevant information relating to their portfolio areas, alongside the relevant Director.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Services and Welsh Language thanked the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny for the opportunity to update Members on his

portfolio and took Members through his report.

He explained that Adult Social Services and our Wellbeing Services key priorities for the Council. In summary a key aim is to support people in their wish to live safely and independently in their own homes for as long as possible, which contributes to improving their long-term wellbeing.

Members were presented with a summary of performance and the Cabinet Member reaffirmed the view that our teams across Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council continue to deliver a high quality of service to people needing care and support. It was also highlighted that the authority continues to demonstrate strong commitment to joint working.

The Cabinet Member then gave an overview of each aspect of the Service under the following headings:

- How are people shaping our services?
- Promoting and improving the wellbeing of people, we help; and
- How are we doing?

After robust discussion, Members put forward their questions and observation. Members thanked the Cabinet Member for his very comprehensive report.

A Member congratulated the service for the work that has been carried out with regards to the remodelling and modernisation of community based services and felt strongly that the service was going in the right direction as privacy and dignity for our ageing population is a must.

Another Member thanked the Cabinet Member and Officers for the information put before them and was provided with an update on where we are with the Maesyffynon Extra Care Development. The Member then referred to performance indicators for support after reablement and asked why we appeared to be below our target what we are doing about this with an increasingly elderly population.

It was explained that we have set ambitious targets for performance and that whilst performance remains good we will continue to ambitious in our target setting. The Group Director Community and Children's Services explained that performance remained good comparatively.

Members wanted clarification as to what part private companies play in the new structure of the Extra Care Facilities.

The Officers explained that the arrangements and confirmed that in accordance with the report approved by Cabinet care would be provided by the Council in a number of new facilities.

Another Member commented on the Extra Care, raised concerns regarding the scope of extra care and whether it was the most appropriate response for individuals with complex needs. Officers explained that the new facilities can be flexible in terms of the level of support provided but that those with more complex needs will be supported in Residential care where required. Extra Care will enhance the range of options available to our community as part of the whole system review and modernisation agenda for Adult services as a whole.

After further discussion Members **REOLVED** to acknowledge the content of the report.

12 **CWM TAF SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING PARTNERSHIP BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19**

The Cabinet Member for Adult Services & Welsh Language thanked Members for having the opportunity to present the Cwm Taf Social Services and Wellbeing Partnership Annual Report. He highlighted that this was the first time scrutiny had received the report and hoped that this would become an annual item on the agenda of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny going forward.

He explained that he would present an overview of the Board and its role. It was explained that the Social Service and Wellbeing Act Wales (2014) identified the statutory need for regions to create Regional Partnership Boards to oversee integrated strategic approaches to deliver integrated Health and Social Care Services.

The Cabinet Member explained that Welsh Government have more recently published "A Healthier Wales: which also confirmed the importance of Regional Partnership Working to further develop new models of integrated Health and Social Care that are innovative and address regional priorities. He explained that RPBs are expected to provide a strong oversight and coordinating role as highlighted by the expectations of the national Transformation programme.

Members were presented with the key priorities for 2019/20 and were also informed of the Partnerships focus for 2019/20 which are;

- Developing and embedding new governance arrangements for the new region.
- Developing a communications strategy and communication capacity to support the Regional Partnerships Board
- Delivering on the Transformation proposals
- Explore opportunities for increased social value sector engagements
- Utilise the monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

After further consideration of the report, Members put forward their question and observations.

A Member thanked the Cabinet Member for a very interesting and useful report.

A Member commented that he could not wait to see the new Stay Well at Home Service going forward, along with the GP Practice Development visits.

Members commented on the concern they have in respect of pay scales, pressure of work, and changing expectations for the work force. Officer explained the Social Care work force is a concern and work is being done to look at the points raised as they play an important part in looking after the wellbeing of our residents in RCT.

Members thanked Officers for the report and after further discussion

RESOLVED:

- To acknowledge the Cwm Taf Social Services and Wellbeing Partnership Board Annual Report 2018/19
- To receive updates from the Regional Partnership Board at future Meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.

13 Cabinet Response to the Recommendations of the EMI Scrutiny working Group

The Cabinet Member for Adult Services & Welsh Language informed Members that the Cabinet is pleased to confirm their agreement to the Scrutiny Working Group recommendations and thanked the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee for undertaking this important piece of work.

Members were provided with a detailed response within the report for each recommendation. Members considered each response and **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the Cabinet Response.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for the report and for all his hard work.

This meeting closed at 6.05 pm

**CLLR R. YEO
CHAIR.**



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 19th November 2019

SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMMES

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATIONS

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is seek Members proposals to develop a forward work programme for the next six months. Members are asked to consider the draft forward work programme (attached as Appendix 1) and determine whether the items included (particularly from January 2020 –March 2020) are relevant and in line with the terms of reference of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee:-

- 2.1 Review and agree the draft Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2019/20 (which now includes work programme topics from January to April 2020);
- 2.2 Identify any additional items Members wish to consider including in the forward work programme; and
- 2.3 Consider any training requirements that will assist Members in their role.
- 2.4 Consider providing the necessary flexibility to accommodate pre-scrutiny opportunities and early engagement in policy development; Members should also consider providing the opportunity for consideration of items generated through future public engagement.

3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Members will recall that at the previous meeting of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, held on the 9th July 2019, a report was presented by the Service Director of Democratic Services & Communications, which outlined a number of changes to the Scrutiny arrangements in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 3.2 One of the improvements included the development of a more streamlined forward work programme, which contained less items for consideration at each committee meeting to allow for more in depth review of topics and potential referrals from Council, Audit Committee and other sources.
- 3.3 Initially, the scrutiny work programmes were developed on a six monthly basis (up until December 2019) so as to give each individual scrutiny committee the opportunity to take stock and review their respective programmes going forward. The attached draft work programme contains items for consideration for the remaining Municipal Year, from January 2020 to March 2020.
- 3.4 The attached draft work programme has been compiled from current business identified and matters relating to the Council's Corporate Performance themes and priorities.
- 3.5 When setting their work programme members are asked to consider and acknowledge their role relating to the Well-being of Future Generations Act goals and the importance of ensuring that the decisions of the Council are progressed through the lenses of the Act.
- 3.6 The proposed work programme also incorporates matters previously identified by Scrutiny members such as:-
- The new Community Hubs;
 - Art and Culture Strategy;
 - Registrars Service.
- 3.7 A series of Cabinet/Scrutiny engagement sessions were held throughout October between the Scrutiny Chairs, Vice Chairs, respective Cabinet Members and Senior Leadership Officers, which supported the Scrutiny arrangements going forward and also informed the respective forward work programmes.

4. TRAINING

- 4.1 To assist Scrutiny Members in fulfilling their role a training session was arranged for all RCT scrutiny members and co-opted members on Friday, 25th October 2019 (9.30am-12.30pm). The session was facilitated by Dr Dave McKenna, a dedicated scrutiny practitioner with ten years' experience including as Manager of Swansea Council scrutiny team. He has presented at national conferences in Wales and hosted workshops at three Centre for Public Scrutiny annual conferences.

- 4.2 The scrutiny training session was solution focussed and asked Members to consider what works well in their own local authority and what Members are looking to improve by using good practice ideas. One of the key aims of the session was to explore how scrutiny in RCT can have more impact through improved questioning.
- 4.3 Further to the Scrutiny training session, ongoing training requirements are a key consideration and therefore Members are asked to identify any other gaps in their development particularly in relation to undertaking scrutiny of the items listed on the forward work programme.
- 4.4 It is important for all members of scrutiny to engage in the training opportunities provided to support their role.

5. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1 The Council continues to progress opportunities for the public to engage in the scrutiny process. Further enhancements are underway to provide better access to the business of scrutiny online. This includes providing more user-friendly information to support the public engaging in this important element of the Council's democratic processes and overall governance functions.
- 5.2 Members are asked to consider the Council's Scrutiny Public Engagement Protocol, agreed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the [13th December 2018](#).
- 5.3 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee will shortly consider subject areas to be promoted through social media, for the public, to select as matters for scrutiny to explore and consider. Members are asked to provide flexibility in their work programmes to allow sufficient opportunity for scrutiny of these areas, where they fall within the remit of the committee.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Determining its own work programme and deciding on what evidence to seek to fulfil its scrutiny role; asking relevant and timely questions at meetings and participating in activities that the Committee has agreed to pursue outside of its formal meetings are all key to effective scrutiny.
- 6.2 The Council is continuing its work to strengthen its scrutiny arrangements and these enhancements support the council in responding to the findings arising from the recent WAO report and will further strengthen governance and accountability arrangements.

7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising from this report and no Equality Impact Assessment is deemed necessary for the purposes of this report.

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The considerations and comments of Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs have been sought in respect of the forward work programmes and it will be for the Members of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to review and agree its own work programme at its meeting on the 19th November 2019.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no financial implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 There are no legal implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

11 LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 11.1 The proposals to address the WAO report proposals includes arrangements to strengthen the Council's consideration and scrutiny of its work, through 'the lens of the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act'. These arrangements will be embedded into the business of the Council as set out in the Policy Statement agreed by Cabinet [on 2 November 2016](#).
- 11.2 The proposals outlined within the report will work to ensure a sustainable and robust scrutiny structure is in place, which will effectively challenge policy decisions taken forward.

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMMES

Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

‘Holding the Executive to account in respect of all three priorities within the Council’s Corporate Plan....Economy (Building a strong economy), People (Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone), Place (Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work).’

Each of the Council’s Scrutiny Committees is responsible for setting and agreeing its own work programme by identifying a list of themes and topics which fall under the remit of each individual Scrutiny Committee. Following discussion with the Chair, Vice Chair and Scrutiny Members a practical, realistic and timetabled programme can then be developed.

The scrutiny forward work programmes should provide a clear rationale as to why particular issues have been selected; be outcome focussed; ensure that the method of scrutiny is best suited to the topic area and the outcome desired; align scrutiny programmes with the council’s performance management, self-evaluation and improvement arrangements.

Throughout the year, there are a number of ways in which additional issues can be considered for inclusion in the Scrutiny Work Programme and ideas for inclusion may come from a number of sources such as:-

- Individual Councillors;
- Performance or budget monitoring information;
- Inspection reports;
- Referrals from Council (such as Notices of Motion), Cabinet/Audit or other scrutiny committees;
- Service users;
- Monitoring the implementation of recommendations previously made by the Committee; and
- Local Residents

The Cabinet is also required to produce forward work programmes and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee keeps abreast of forthcoming items or topics which may enable scrutiny to be involved in the development of Council policy prior to its formal consideration by Cabinet. It is important to bear in mind that an element of flexibility is applied to each individual work programme that provides Committees with the capacity to scrutinise new / urgent issues that arise during the year. For this reason the Scrutiny Work Programmes will be published for a 6 month period and reviewed every quarter.

HEALTH & WELBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE					
Date/Time	Overarching Item	Officer	Cabinet Member	Invited/ In attendance	Scrutiny Focus
9th July 2019, 5pm Committee Room 1, Clydach Vale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Work Programme 	Service Director Democratic Services & Communications Group Director, Community & Children's Services Director of Adult Services			Scrutiny & Challenge – For Members of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to consider the work programme for 2019/2020.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training Needs 	Service Director Democratic Services & Communications Group Director, Community & Children's Services Director of Adult Services			To consider and develop a schedule of training requirements for members of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre Scrutiny of the Director of Social Services Report 	Group Director, Community & Children's Services			Scrutiny & Challenge – To undertake pre scrutiny of the Annual report to ascertain whether it represents a true evaluation of the Local Authority's performance
24th September 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notice of Motion initial meeting 	Service Director Democratic Services & Communications			To consider and agree the initial way forward with regards to the Notices of Motion in respect of Autism and Motor Neurone Disease
	Cabinet Response to	Cabinet Member for Adult Community Services	Councillor G Hopkins Cabinet		To consider the response of Cabinet in respect of the

	recommendation of the EMI	Group Director Community & Children's Services	Member Adult & Community Services		recommendations of the Working group for the EMI Nursing Bed Provision within RCT.
	Regional Partnership Board Annual Review & Transformational Bid	Cabinet Member for Adult Community Services Group Director Community & Children's Services	Councillor G Hopkins Cabinet Member Adult & Community Services		To consider the work carried out by the Regional Partnership Board
19th November 2019, 5pm Committee Room 1, Clydach Vale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly Review of the O&S Scrutiny Work Programme 	Service Director Democratic Services & Communications Group Director, Community & Children's Services Director of Adult Services			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the Work Programme suitable and relevant to the Terms of Reference? Does the Work Programme illustrate clear outcomes and objectives? Members of the O&S Committee to provide comment in relation to the Work Programme.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notices of Motion in respect of Autism 	Director of Adult Services			Scrutiny & Challenge – Progress the Notices of Motion in respect of Autism and Motor Neurone Disease

					(MND) as part of the Health & Wellbeing Work Programme. Autism – Identify what more the Council can do to support those living with Autism.
	Annual Safeguarding Report (INFORMATION ONLY) Annual Complaints Report (INFORMATION ONLY)				
	• Tackling Empty Properties	Service Director – Prosperity and Development			Scrutiny & Challenge – Review the Council's performance in tackling empty properties and assess whether it has proactively targeted long term empty private sector homes.
	Community Hubs	Service Director Community Services			Scrutiny and Challenge – to consider the work being being
10th December 2019, 5pm, Committee Room 1, Clydach Vale	• Delayed Transfers of Care	Group Director, Community & Children's Services Director of Adult Services			Scrutiny & Challenge – Assess the progress of the Cwm Taf Social Services and Wellbeing Partnership Board in respect of Delayed Transfers of Care and review the work of RCT Social Services.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MND Notice of Motion 	Director of Adult Services			MND – Examine how the Council can best implement the aims of the MND Charter following its adoption
	Mental Health Update (included an update from the Mental Health Steering Group)	Director of Adult Services Officer from MIND Group Director Community and Children’s Services		Invite Officer from MIND	Analyse what support is available for people suffering with Mental Health Issues within the County Borough
	Update on Extra Care provision	Group Director, Community & Children’s Services Director of Adult Services			Scrutiny & Challenge – To receive an update on the status of the extra care provision
28th January 2020 5pm Council Chamber Clydach Vale	Cabinet & Scrutiny Engagement	Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, Well-being & Cultural Services Director – Public Health Protection and Community Services			Scrutiny and Challenge – To consider the progress made in advancing the portfolio responsibilities of the Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities Wellbeing & Cultural Services
	Wales Audit Report on Environmental Health	Director – Public Health Protection and Community Services Service Director Public Protection			Scrutiny & Challenge – To consider the Wales Audit Report in respect of Environmental Health Services
	Art & Culture Strategy update	Director – Public Health Protection and Community Services Service Director Community Services			Scrutiny & Challenge – To receive an overview of the Arts and Culture Strategy

24th February 2020 5pm Council Chamber, Clydach Vale	Homeless Prevention Strategy Action Plan	Director – Public Health, Protection and Community Services Service Director Public Protection			Scrutiny & Challenge – To Scrutinise the Homeless Prevention Strategy action Plan
	New Housing models related to Housing First	Director – Public Health, Protection and Community Services Service Director Public Protection			To examine the new housing models related to Housing First
30th March 2020 5pm Council Chamber	Registration Services EU Settlement Scheme	Director – Public Health, Protection and Community Services Service Director, Public Protection Trading Standards and Registrar Services Manager			To receive an overview of the service and EU Settlement Scheme
	Commissioning Service and Substance Misuse	Director – Public Health, Protection and Community Services Service Director Public Protection Cwm Taf APB Lead			Scrutiny & Challenge To assess the progress of the Service
30th March 2020 5pm Council Chamber	Hope Rescue – Review of SLA	Director Public Health, Protection and Community Services			

		Service Director, Public Protection			
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Other Areas for exploration:-

Reports for links to be embedded on the agenda

Training Requirements:-

TRAINING IN RESPECT OF DEMENTIA FRIENDLY CARE

DISABILILTY TOOLKIT TRAINING

Current Scrutiny Working Groups:-

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**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019/20**

**HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

19th NOVEMBER 2019

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR,
COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Agenda Item No:

**OVERVIEW OF HOW THE COUNCIL
CURRENTLY SUPPORTS THOSE
LIVING WITH AUTISM WITHIN
RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

Author: Neil Elliott, Director of Adult Services. Tel No. 01443 444603

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. This report has been prepared at the request of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to provide members with an overview of how the Council currently supports those living with autism within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee:

- 2.1 Scrutinise and comment on the information provided
- 2.2 Consider whether there is any further information or matters contained in the report that it wishes to receive and scrutinise in greater depth.
- 2.3 Consider how to engage the experiences of service users in the process of scrutinising this matter and developing potential recommendations.
- 2.4 Consider how partner organisations can be engaged and scrutinised to facilitate the development of proposals to support those living with autism in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 At its meeting on 9th July 2019, the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee requested an overview of current autism support services available in Rhondda Cynon Taf in order to identify the most practical and effective way to improve outcomes and access to services for those living with autism, following adoption of an amended notice of motion at the Council meeting on 27th March 2019.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Autism is a lifelong developmental condition that affects how people understand and interact with the world around them. Autism affects 1 in 100 people. It is referred to as a spectrum condition because of the wide range of presentations seen in autistic individuals; for example, some people may also have a co-occurring learning disability. However, all people who are considered to be autistic will share common difficulties, although these difficulties may affect them in different ways. The condition has different names attached to it, such as autism, autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) autistic spectrum condition (ASC). Asperger syndrome and pathological demand avoidance, which are all forms of autism.
- 4.2 The broad areas in which all people with autism will experience difficulties in: are social interaction; social communication and routines; repetitive behaviours and intense interests. Autism represents a very wide range of lived experience for those with the condition. Many individuals with the condition are able to live fulfilled lives with moderate challenges, however, autism can also be a condition which profoundly disables a person through the impact of the condition on their ability to interact with the environment and people in it.
- 4.3 The number of people diagnosed with Autism has increased and in turn has increased demand for diagnostic services for individuals of all ages across all services.
- 4.4 Diagnosis may occur at any stage of life - many people are diagnosed with autism in childhood, but more people are seeking assessments as adults, partly due to increased awareness of autism.

Children and Young People (up to the age of 18 years)

- 4.5 Diagnosis is undertaken by the Neurodevelopment Team of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board. This multidisciplinary Team provides specialist knowledge and skills for children and young people with complex neurodevelopmental conditions (including ASD and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and their families in the following areas:
- assessment
 - diagnosis
 - advice and intervention (where appropriate and possible), and
 - liaison with existing services within the Health Board, partner agencies and voluntary organisations
- 4.6 Requests for assessment are considered from primary and secondary level care providers, as long as sufficient relevant information is available. However, requests for assessment are encouraged from the professional who knows the young person best.

Adults

- 4.7 The Cwm Taf Integrated Autism Service (IAS) provides diagnostic assessments for adults aged 18 years and over who are suspected of having autism. In addition to the provision of a diagnostic assessment, the Cwm Taf IAS provides:
- support for adults with autism with their social, communication, sensory, dietetic, leisure and employment opportunities and independent living skills via individual and group interventions
 - help parent/carers of children with autism to understand and support; behaviour that challenges, social, communication, sensory and dietetic needs via individual and group interventions
 - post-diagnostic support for adults with autism and their parent/carers
 - autism training, consultation and advice to professionals working with people with autism
 - signposting to other appropriate local services
- 4.8 The IAS forms part of a Wales wide Autism Strategy to develop support for individuals with ASD and their families and key components of the pathways and local services response has also been developed nationally.
- 4.9 Opened in March 2018, the Cwm Taf IAS is a multi-professional team hosted by the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board with staff from the Health Board and Rhondda Cynon Taf Council employed as part of Team. The IAS Team is based in Ysbyty Cwm Cynon and consists of the following 10.5 whole time equivalent posts:

Post
Psychologist
Occupational Therapist
Speech and Language Therapist (0.5)
Dietician
Specialty Practitioner Nurse
Social Worker
Support Worker x 4
Administrative Assistant

5. THE APPROACH OF SCRUTINY - GATHERING EVIDENCE

- 5.1 To support the committee to develop its understanding of the challenges and experiences of residents in Rhondda Cynon Taf who are required to access Autism services, members are asked to consider what evidence they may wish to consider receiving as part of this matter.
- 5.2 This might include hearing from service delivery leads both in the local authority and from a health perspective.

- 5.3 Members are also asked to consider if there would be value in hearing the views and direct experiences of service users, either from individuals or through support groups or organisations with represent users of these key services.
- 5.4 Members may wish to utilise a varied of methods to gather this evidence, including a public 'call to action' to secure this information to support the future work of the committee in respect of this matter.
- 5.5 In taking this approach, members are asked to consider:
- What do we want to achieve?
 - What do we know/need to know?
 - What are we going to ask about?

6. SUPPORT SERVICES IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

- 6.1 In Rhondda Cynon Taf, there are a range of services provided to children, young people, adults with autism and their families. The provision varies considerably depending upon the complexity of need of the individual.
- 6.2 Some individuals with autism will not use high-level, specialist services for their condition but will use some of the same services as everyone else. As well as the services that are available for everyone, there is also an overview service in Rhondda Cynon Taf for people with autism as outlined in Appendix 1.
- 6.3 There are also a range support services and groups either run in the voluntary sector or self-organised by parents and carers who provide invaluable support for other parents and carers, such as Autism Directory, ASD Rainbow; NSD Rhondda Cynon Taf; Follow Your Dreams, Autism Parent Support Group (Rhondda), etc.
- 6.4 In addition, the DEWIS Cymru Website provide information on autism related support services, events and activities in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The National Autistic Society Autism Service Directory also provides information on services and support available for people with autism, their families and people who work with them throughout the UK.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This is an information report - there are no equality and diversity implications associated with this report.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 This is an information report - there is no consultation required for this report.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 This is an information report - there are no financial implications aligned to this report.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1 This is an information report – none at present

11. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

11.1 The Scrutiny Working Group report links to the Council's Corporate Plan Priority People – 'Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone' and the Council outcome "Learning and Growing - all people will fulfil their potential through skills and learning".

12. CONCLUSION

12.1 This paper seeks to give Scrutiny Members an overview of how the Council currently supports those living with autism within Rhondda Cynon Taf.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**OVERVIEW OF HOW THE COUNCIL CURRENTLY SUPPORTS THOSE LIVING
WITH AUTISM WITHIN RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Council 29th March 2019

Officer to contact: Neil Elliott, Director of Adult Services. Tel No. 01443 444603

Service Title	Provider	Age Group	Service Information
Neurodevelopmental Team	CTMUHB (CAMHS)	0-18	Provides specialist knowledge and skills for children and young people with complex neurodevelopmental conditions, including autism and their families in the following areas: assessment; diagnosis; advice and intervention (where appropriate and possible) and liaison with existing services within the UHB, partner agencies and voluntary organisations.
Integrated Autism Service	CTMUHB	18+	Provides diagnostic assessment for autistic adults (sometimes jointly with other services including support and advice for autistic adults and parent carers, including: anxiety, social skills, accessing leisure and recreational activities, developing your daily living skills (such as paying bills, shopping and cooking) and accessing other services such as healthcare or employment support or other difficulties which you may be experiencing.
Training and awareness	Halcyon Foundation	All ages	Commissioned by Heath and Adult and Children's Services - Halcyon raises awareness of autism and related neurodevelopmental conditions through training and education. It aims to reduce conflict within families and communities and offers advice and support to all those affected. Halcyon is made up of parents, carers, those on the autistic spectrum and professionals.
Educational Psychology	Access and Inclusion, Education	0-19	Highly skilled team of qualified Educational Psychologists (EPs) who support children and young people with a broad range of difficulties and needs. Within this team, there is a specialist subgroup of EPs who have additional experience, expertise and training in relation to autism. This team work collaboratively with school staff, parents and the Health Board to assist in the identification of the needs of the children and young people, recommendations with regards to provision to meet these needs and support with regards to the diagnostic process.
Early Years Outreach project	Access and Inclusion, Education - via Ysgol Hen Felin	3-5	Specialist Teacher and Teaching Assistant input to schools, to support transition of early years learners with additional needs including autism into mainstream school settings. This includes staff training, advice and support to implement recommended strategies over a 6 week transition period.
Home Visiting Service	Home-Start Cymru	0-11	This commissioned service supports families of children under 11 years of age who are experiencing any of the following difficulties; parent or child's emotional wellbeing, low self-esteem, conflict at home; managing children's behaviour and the child's learning and development. Home-Start provide tailored packages of support to all families, including those with autism on either a one to one basis, or by peer support groups, they also have a sensory room within their family area.

Parenting Provision	<p>In-house Universal Parenting Team</p> <p>Commissioned - Challenging Behaviour Support Group</p> <p>Commissioned - Valleys Kids</p>		<p>Universal Parenting Team provides a variety of parenting programmes as well as , offering bespoke packages of one to one support in the home, tailored to the family's needs,. The Team coordinates all the referrals for parenting programmes and allocates them based on need. The dedicated behaviour programmes are: Early Bird; Early Bird Plus; Parent Factor in ADHD and Early Intervention Behaviour Programme.</p> <p>The Team and Valleys Kids co-facilitate the following programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Bird programme for parents of pre-school children with a diagnosis of an autism. The 8 week programme aims to support parents in the period between diagnosis and school placement, empowering and helping them facilitate their child's social communication and appropriate behaviour in their natural environment. It also helps parents to establish good practice in handling their child at an early age, so as to pre-empt the development of inappropriate behaviours. • Early Bird Plus programme for parents of children aged 4-8 years of age with a diagnosis of an autism. The 8 week programme gives parents an awareness of what autism is, the right type of communication and behaviour management strategies. <p>The Challenging Behaviour Support Group and Valleys Kids co-facilitate the following programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Intervention Behaviour Programme - An 8 week programme developed in partnership to provide support for parents whose children do not have a diagnosis of autism. This new programme has been developed using strategies from existing behaviour programmes to meet the identified gap in support for parents with children who do not have a diagnosed condition. • The Parent Factor in ADHD for parents of children aged 5-16 years who have received a diagnosis of ADHD. The 8 week programme aims to help parent's to support their child by understanding the ADHD diagnosis and treatment, learning new strategies and to be able to advocate on their child's behalf, particularly within the education system.
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Parenting Provision	Challenging behaviour Support Group	0-18	The service offers support to parents /carers of children with challenging behaviours, both pre and post diagnosis, by offering families bespoke one to one support, group support, parent link up, peer support / parent match support, thematic training, they also deliver parenting programmes (as stated above).
Parenting Provision	Valley Kids	0-18	The service is commissioned to provide parenting support and open access family play provision. The service offers full inclusion on all parenting programmes delivered (in addition to the specialist programmes stated above), they also offer fully inclusive bespoke one to one support, family engagement and additional support.
Resilient Families Service	Children's Services		The Service is a wider service and not dedicated for people with autism. The Children with Additional Needs Service (CANS) will work with families where the neuro-developmental, cognitive or physical impairment needs of their child(en) are below the statutory threshold for intervention and the family requires specialist support to understand and manage their child's needs and/or address the impact on the wider family. Families may require early intervention or intensive intervention. The CANS team will be responsible for providing bespoke, specialist support to families that focuses on improving the quality of family life; delivering short term intensive packages of support to families in order to develop effective parenting strategies to maximise a child's potential; and advocating on behalf of families with other services and agencies.
Disabled Children's Team	Children's Services	0-19	<p>The Team is the specialist social care service that carries out social care assessments and provides services to children and young people with disabilities, including autism. The Team works with individual children and young people to developing independent skills through an accreditation model following ASDAN or OCN evidence skill building. Some of the support that may be provided include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of short breaks provided in-house and by commissioned services. It is meant to allow families to spend time together without the disabled child and for the disabled child to have fun, try new activities and develop friendships. • Direct payments • Community Occupational Therapy support to reduce the impact of disability within the home environment
Special School placements	Access and Inclusion, Education	3-19	<p>Highly specialist placements for learners with very complex learning needs including autism. There are four special schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maesgwyn School

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park Lane School • Ysgol Hen Felin • Ysgol Ty Coch, including the satellite site at Buarth y Capel in Ynysybwl to meet the needs of young people aged 14 to 19 with primary need of autism and who had previously been taught in specialist autistic provision.
Learner Support Service - speech language and communication needs, including autism	Access and Inclusion, Education	3-19	Outreach service to support schools to meet their needs of learners with autism and social communication needs (often first call from schools prior to autism diagnosis).
Learning Support Classes	Access and Inclusion, Education	5-16	<p>Specific classes for learners with diagnosis of autism and high level need. There are learning support classes in ten mainstream schools for pupils with autism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abercynon Community Primary • Hafod Primary • Maesybryn Primary • Oaklands Primary • Penywaun Primary • Perthcelyn Community Primary • Williamstown Primary • Aberdare Community School • Bryncelynnog Comprehensive • Porth Community School <p>Other classes support learners who may have autism alongside other more complex needs e.g. learning disability, behavioural needs.</p>
Therapies Services	CTMUHB	0-19	<p>Local Health Board Therapies Service which includes Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Physiotherapy and Dietetics provide a range of interventions and treatments for children and young people (and their families) for people with special/additional/learning disability needs including people with autism. The services offer evidence based advice and treatment/interventions for children and young people with autism and work closely with the child/young Persons educational placement to advise on strategies/treatments to support the individual.</p> <p>Access and Inclusion work in partnership with Local Health Board to provide pupils within the autism provisions with an enhanced Speech and Language Therapy Service, this is above and beyond the service provided by the Core Team.</p>

Young Adult Carers Project	Carers Support Project	18-25	The project is fully inclusive and provides a 2 tier level of support. They provide intensive support to all newly referred young adult carers, by offering tailored packages of support based on their assessed need, and provide support to the established young adult cares who continue to participate with the project following their intensive support phase.
Parent Carer Network	Carers Support Project		The network is a separate database within Carers Support Project with 448 parent carers registered. The majority of these care for children with autism. The network have their own newsletter section (called Smalltalk) within the Carers News booklet 3 times a year with specific information and news related to parent carers. During the school holidays, Carers Support Project will organise family events, requested by the Disabled Children's Team, for example circus skills workshop, Pontypridd Park takeover and trips to Techniquet and Cantref Farm. During term time the focus of events tends to be on carer learning, most recently nutrition for autism, CV workshop and functional reflexology. During the coming months, information coffee mornings will take place with speakers from the Disabled Children's Team, speech and language and resilient families to name a few.
Adult Social Work Teams	Adults	18+	Teams across Adult Services carry out social care assessments for adults with autism who may also have a learning disability or mental health condition in order to assess what care and support they need. Some of the support that may be provided include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advice and assistance • provision of respite services • accommodation services • day service opportunities, • care at home and direct payments
Specialist day and residential placements - Ty Coryton, Cardiff	Ty Orbis	8-19	Commissioned by Children Services - Tŷ Coryton provides a specialist integrated day and residential service for children and young people who have a diagnosis of autism.
Specialist College placement - Beechwood College, Sully	Beechwood Court Ltd	16+	Commissioned by Adult Services - college offers day and residential placements to learners aged 16+ who have learning disabilities and/or autism.
Junior Stars	Leisure Services	Up to age 24	Focussing on access to physical activity and sport this service supports children and young people who are vulnerable, at risk or have identified health needs, including autism.

Day Services - Autism Life Centre	Autism Life Centre	18+	Commissioned by Adult Services - Autism Life Centre (based in Trealaw) provides specific day time service for adults (up to 10 attendees) who have a diagnosis of autism but also a complex learning disability.
Day Services - Complex Autism Service	Adult Services	18+	Specific in-house day time provision (based in Treforest) for adults with autism who have a learning disability. The Complex Autism Service follows the Teech Method. Due to a projected increase in demand we are currently exploring options for more specialist provision in the Cynon Valley rather than place individuals out of County.
Day Services - Learning Curves	Adult Services	18+	In-house learning disability day services (Treforest, Llwynypia and Gadlys Aberdare) that support a number of individuals with autism and an associated learning disability and support individuals stepping down from the Complex Autism Service.
Residential Placements - Ty Coed, Longford Court, Neath	National Autistic Society	18+	Commissioned by Adult Services - Ty Coed provides a specific residential service for adults who have a diagnosis of autism.
Residential Placements - Pen Y Coed, Crumlin and Green Gables, Aberkenfig	Values in Care	18+	Commissioned by Adult Services - these residential placements provide 24-hour specialist support and accommodation for young adults with learning disabilities who have complex needs including those on the autistic spectrum.
Respite Accommodation	Adult Services	18+	In-house respite provision that supports adults with a learning disability who may also have a diagnosis of autism. Current facilities include Beech Cottage, Aberaman; Clwyd Wen, Miskin; Ystrad Fechan Bungalow, Treorchy and Belle Vue, Treforest. Beech Cottage and Ystrad Fechan offer an option of loan or selected occupancy in order to support individuals with a more severe diagnosis of autism.
Supported Living Accommodation	Adult Services	18+	Both provided in-house and commissioned externally - we support adults with a learning disability who may also have a diagnosis of autism to live independently in their own homes as tenants with others.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019-2020

HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19TH NOVEMBER 2019

REPORT OF:
DIRECTOR OF PROSPERITY AND
DEVELOPMENT

Agenda Item No.

TACKLING EMPTY HOMES

Author: Derek James, Service Director of Prosperity and Development

Appendices: Empty Homes Strategy (2018-2021)
Empty Homes Action Plan (2019 – 2020)
Empty Property Advice Pack (2019)
Landlord Newsletter (2018)
Empty Homes Case studies

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Scrutiny Members on the progress made in implementing the Council's approach to tackling empty homes, which is set out in the Empty Homes Strategy for the period 2018-2021 (**Appendix A**).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Scrutinise and comment on the information contained within this report.
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters contained in the report.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Empty private sector homes represent a wasted resource, financial expense both to the owners and the Council and in many cases a missed opportunity to provide much needed affordable housing for residents. Not only are they a waste of a valuable housing resource, but they can cause blight to communities

and distress to residents affected by their unsightly appearance and propensity to attract crime and anti-social behaviour.

- 3.2 Council Tax records, from 1st April 2017, revealed that there were 3,556 private sector homes that were vacant for six months or more. This equated to 3.8% of Rhondda Cynon Taf's private housing (owner occupied and private rented) stock. The average for Wales in 2017/2018 was 2.4% with the lowest (Torfaen) having 0.78% of their stock empty.
- 3.3 Whilst, RCT was above the Welsh average and did have the highest number of empty homes in Wales, this was primarily due to the level of 'churn' in the housing market, rather than persistent long term empty homes. For example, in the 1st April 2017 snapshot 59% of homes that were empty had been vacant for less than three years and in total **only 684 (9%) homes** appeared as empty in the last four successive snapshots (i.e. in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017). Most significantly, 4,463 homes (60% of the total across the four years) appeared on only one of the snapshots. As such, the bulk of homes recorded over a 4-year period were only empty for short periods before returning back into use through purchase or rental. Conversely, only a minority of homes (6%) were re-recorded as empty again after being brought back into use over this period.
- 3.4 The 684 empty homes that were identified as being empty, in all four snapshots were identified as a focus for the Council's enforcement and enabling activity.
- 3.5 As a result, in October 4th 2018, Cabinet approved an Empty Homes Strategy for the period 2018-2021, which aims to make a difference to both the scale of empty homes that are brought back into use as well as having a more fundamental impact on the total number in order to reverse the trend in a sustainable way.

4.0 THE STRATEGY

- 4.1 The Strategy (**Appendix A**), sets out 5 objectives that are clear, deliverable and aim to make a difference to both the scale of empty homes that are brought back into use as well as having a more fundamental impact on the total number in order to reverse the trend in a sustainable way.
- 4.2 The objectives are:
 1. **To develop partnerships and vehicles that will enable an increase in the scale of empty homes being brought back into use.**
 2. **To maximise the use of current funding and identify further funding models to increase the number of empty homes that are brought back into use.**
 3. **To continue to use a range of interventions to ensure all types of empty homes are targeted and enabled to be brought back into use and monitor the outcomes related to these closely.**

4. To undertake further research in communities and evaluation of existing schemes to understand why there are a high number of empty homes.
5. To identify possible solutions that could prevent homes from becoming empty and also develop interventions for different market areas and types.

5.0 PROGRESS UPDATE

- 5.1 Since the report to Cabinet, a considerable amount of good work has been undertaken over a short period of time.

Strategic direction and governance

- 5.2 Following the approval of the Empty Homes Strategy by Cabinet, a Multi-Agency Empty Homes Operational Group (EHOG) has been established. The purpose of the EHOG is to ensure that a coherent and structured approach to tackling Empty Homes is implemented. The group oversees and monitors the delivery of the Empty Home Action Plan (**Appendix B**), to ensure the delivery of the objectives set out within the strategy.

A targeted approach

- 5.3 A priority within the Empty Homes Action Plan is to bring long-term empty properties back into use; these are properties that have continued to be vacant over a 4-year period. By analysing the empty properties data, **684** long-term empty properties were identified in RCT. It was agreed that a targeted approach was needed in order to bring these properties back into use by delivering interventions to cohorts of long-term properties. The target set was to deliver interventions within the first year to **171 (25%)** of the long-term empty properties. The interventions include telephone calls to the homeowner, letters sent to the homeowner, visits to the homeowner providing advice and support on opportunities available to bring the property back into use and serving enforcement notices.
- 5.4 Excellent progress has been made with the target being achieved within the first 10 months of the action plan being implemented with **276 (40%)** of the long-term empty properties receiving targeted intervention support. As part of the intervention work, enforcement action has also been undertaken in respect of **11** empty homes, including taking action to deal with accumulations of waste, repairing defects and securing properties to prevent unauthorised access. However, at this stage, it is too early to measure overall impact of these interventions, this will be evidenced in April 2020 when the 2020 council tax data is available. This targeted work will continue to be implemented and monitored by the EHOG.

- 5.5 Furthermore, as of 1st April 2018, the Council has used its discretionary powers to remove the 50% Council Tax discount that was previously applied to long term empty homes. This means that since 1st April 2018, all properties which are both vacant and unfurnished for six months or more, and do not qualify for a Council Tax exemption, have been charged 100% Council Tax.
- 5.6 The impact of this has been significant, with the Housing Grants team seeing a significant increase in the number of queries from both landlords and home owners looking for information, support and advice, such as loans and grants, in order to bring their empty home back into use.

Information, advice and assistance

- 5.7 As part of the first year Empty Homes Action Plan, an Advice Pack (**Appendix C**) has been developed for empty property homeowners. The pack provides information on ways in which to bring their empty properties back into use, such as availability of grants and loan and selling and renting options. The Advice Pack was made available to empty property homeowners in November 2019 and will be promoted through the Council's website and within Council and community buildings. Over the next year, the group will explore further opportunities to improve accessibility of the information provided through the use of social media.
- 5.8 The Housing Strategy Department hosts the RCT Landlord Forum, which is held quarterly and attended by approximately 40 landlords. The Forum enables the Council to engage directly with landlords and potential investors in the County Borough to share information and work together to reduce the number of empty homes in RCT. Since the launch of the Empty Property Strategy, 3 Landlord Forums have taken place; January, May and September 2019. Information shared and discussed in the forum has included the Houses into Homes loan scheme.
- 5.9 The Houses into Homes loan is a Welsh Government funded scheme which provides a loan to help return **privately** owned empty homes back into use. The scheme is designed for applicants who want to rent or sell their property on completion of the refurbishment works. The loan must be repaid on sale or within 2 years from the date of loan approval, whichever is sooner, or within 3 years from the date of the loan approval if the property is for rent. In total, **103** Houses into Homes loans have been approved, which totals **£3.205M** of loans awarded. This scheme alone has helped to bring **148** empty homes back into use (**Appendix D**).
- 5.10 The forum continues to attract 40+ landlords to each meeting, which evidences the need and effectiveness of them. The forum will continue to meet with a focus on sharing good practice, highlighting case studies regarding how empty homes have been brought back into use across RCT.
- 5.11 In addition to this, a Landlord newsletter is published twice a year to provide information, advice and support. One of the schemes that has been promoted through this newsletter is the Council's Homestep Plus scheme. The Homestep

Plus scheme is a partnership between the Council and United Welsh Housing Association where empty homes in the CF37 postcode area are purchased from private Landlords and renovated, utilising Welsh Government funding, and then sold to first time buyers at 70% of the market value (**Appendix E**). To date, a total of **18** empty homes have been purchased, which has resulted in **17** homes being brought back into use. Due to the success of this pilot scheme, the Council is now exploring opportunities to roll it out across additional areas.

- 5.12 The Council's own Empty Homes grant is available to prospective **owner occupiers** who plan to live in the property as their main residence for a period of at least 5 years. The property must have remained unoccupied for a period of 6 months prior to making the grant application. The grant is available for essential repair work to make the property safe and secure and free from any category one hazards. The maximum grant awarded towards the cost of work is £20,000 and applicants are required to make a 15% contribution towards the cost of grant eligible work up to a maximum of £3,000. There is a discretion to waive the 15% contribution in exceptional circumstances such as financial hardship, where the applicant must be in receipt of an income related benefit. Grant conditions are registered with a Full Legal Charge on completion of work for a 5-year period. Full repayment will be required if the property is sold or not occupied as intended during the 5 year grant condition period.
- 5.13 During the financial year 2018/2019 the Housing Grants team received **102** empty home grant applications. All applications were surveyed and **88 (86%) were approved**. By the end of the financial year, **61 (69%)** of cases were complete, the remaining 27 cases are ongoing and have been rolled over into the 2019/2020 programme (**Appendix F**). The total spend against the grant for the financial year 2018/2019 was **£1.24m**, which has brought **61** empty homes back into use.
- 5.14 The Council has recently secured additional Welsh Government funding to provide Interest Free **Owner Occupier** loans. The scheme is being delivered by Robert Owen Community Banking on behalf of the Authority and is designed to help homeowners have safer, warmer and greener homes. Loans are available between £1,000 and £25,000 with repayment terms of up to 10 years. The loans are interest free and there is currently no fees applicable. The loans can be used for building works, including windows, doors, damp-proofing, disabled access, kitchens, bathrooms, stairs, plumbing, electrics, plasterwork, floors, roofing, chimneys and brickwork. The scheme also supports boilers, wood burning stoves and energy efficiency measures such as insulation and some renewable energy installations. The scheme has recently been launched, and is also being directly targeted at empty homes. To date, **50** applications are currently being considered.

A partnership approach

- 5.15 The Council has been working with Housing Association partners to tackle some of RCT's larger empty homes/properties in town centres. These are complex schemes, which often require a number of interventions. Each key town centre has or is developing a town centre regeneration Strategy. The

Strategy will look at the best development mix to take advantage of opportunities, including residential development within the tenure mix, which is best for the town and location. The aim of this approach is to bring back vacant or derelict floorspace/apartments into use for this purpose.

- 5.16 One of the Town Centre Strategies that has been developed is for Porth. The strategy has identified 5 strategic objectives; objective 4 is to support the development of housing. This includes, identifying key residential opportunities, including vacant properties that need redeveloping or renovating. A number of properties close to the train station and at key locations throughout the town centre have the potential for mixed-use development, with commercial and retail opportunities on the ground floors and the reuse of vacant floor space at upper levels, suitable for residential use.
- 5.17 The Council has been working in partnership with Empty Homes Wales, managed by United Welsh Housing Association, to **promote** and **raise awareness** of a leasing scheme they offer, which supports bringing empty homes back into use. The leasing scheme covers any renovation works required to bring an empty home up to a habitable standard. On completion of the works, Empty Homes Wales, will then lease the property for the homeowner and manage the tenancy. Rental income received during the term of the lease is used to offset the cost of the renovation works. Once the renovation costs have been repaid, Empty Homes Wales can continue to rent the home, in return for a management fee, which is deducted from the rental income.
- 5.18 The Council is developing positive relationships with a number of potential empty home investors who are keen to purchase empty homes across the Authority to bring them back into use. The Council will facilitate this by creating the link between the investors and the homeowner and/or landlord, in order for discussions to take place regarding a potential sale. The Council plans to strengthen this partnership by facilitating a webpage that will offer further opportunities to sell empty homes to potential investors.

6.0 IMPACT

- 6.1 The Council's approach to tackling empty homes is having a significant impact on the number of empty homes across the borough. Council tax records show that between 2017/2018 and 2018/2019, the period the Empty Homes Strategy was implemented, the number of empty homes across the borough has reduced from **3,556 to 2,885**, a **reduction** of **671** properties (please note that this data is based on one snapshot in time).
- 6.2 Furthermore, in 2018-2019, RCT brought a total of **213 (7.4%)** empty homes back into use, directly from Council intervention, performing **2.8% above the National Welsh Average**. This is a 2% increase on the previous year.
- 6.3 National benchmarking data for 2018/2019 also ranks RCT **1st** in Wales for the **number** of empty homes brought back into use and **6th** in Wales for the **percentage**. This is an **improvement** from the 2017/2018 data that ranked

RCT 2nd place for the **number** of empty homes brought back into use and 8th place for the **percentage**.

- 6.4 In addition to this, our approach to tackling empty homes has been recognised by Welsh Government and in particular the Valley's Taskforce, as sector leading. As such, the Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport, in his capacity as chair of the Valleys Taskforce, has agreed to provide funding of £10M to roll out RCT's Empty Homes grant across all Valley Taskforce authorities. The Valleys Taskforce members have also requested that RCT act as the lead body and therefore co-ordinate the delivery of the grant. This is significant investment which will further support and accelerate the number of empty homes being brought back into use across the borough and the Valley's Taskforce authorities.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 An equality and diversity screening exercise was undertaken prior to the implementation of the Empty Homes Strategy and a full impact assessment was not required. There have been no further assessments completed.

8.0 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 A consultation exercise is not required at this stage but may be required as actions within the strategy are delivered.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 There are currently no financial implications aligned to this report. Welsh Government funding has been awarded to the Council for the existing Houses into Homes loan scheme and the Council's current budget for the Empty Property Grant is £2.5M for 2019/20-2020/21
- 9.2 If any additional funding requirements are identified to support the delivery of the strategy, these will be reported to Members for agreement.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 The delivery of the aims of the strategy will in some cases require the utilisation of existing Housing and Planning legislation where enforcement action in relation to an empty property is required.

11.0 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 11.1 Investment in housing provides an ongoing stimulus to the local economy, by encouraging spending and local supply chains. Making available a supply of affordable homes also helps to improve the prosperity of residents and helps support a huge range of households in society that may not otherwise be able to meet their needs in the market, thereby promoting independence and positive lives for all.
- 11.2 As such, the Empty Homes Strategy will continue to contribute to the delivery of all three of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities of economy, people and place. The Strategy will also continue to assist the Council to contribute to three of the seven wellbeing goals that 'The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' puts in place as follows:
1. A healthier Wales
 2. A prosperous Wales
 3. A Wales of cohesive communities

12.0 CONCLUSION

- 12.1 The Empty Homes Strategy has been implemented for one year and has provided a framework for all empty homes activity, ensuring a co-ordinated approach across the borough.
- 12.2 The strategy enables the positive work undertaken over recent years to be built on in order to decrease the total number of empty homes in the borough overall. The empty homes data for 2018/2019 clearly evidences that the Empty Homes Strategy and working collaboratively with partners, is being successful in having a positive impact on reducing the number of empty homes across RCT.



Rhondda Cynon Taf Empty Homes Strategy 2018-2021

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and strategic drivers

The purpose of this Strategy is to provide a framework for all activity in the County Borough aimed at bringing empty homes back into use. It will replace the Cwm Taf Empty Property Strategy that was produced jointly with Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council in 2014. The need to have a distinct strategy for RCT going forward is in recognition of the high numbers of empty homes in the borough, especially in the North and the Council's commitment to addressing the problem. It is also in appreciation of the continued pressure to deliver affordable housing. Whilst most new housing supply will be delivered through new build developments, bringing empty homes back into use can offer an economically viable option which can also contribute to increasing affordable housing supply, whilst at the same time having a positive impact on existing communities by improving environmental and social conditions.

In 2015/16 a Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Working Group reviewed the issue of empty homes and made recommendations to Cabinet. One of the recommendations was to produce a new Empty Homes Strategy reflecting the findings and recommendations of the working group.

In February 2016, the Council approved its Corporate Plan for 2016-2020. The focus of the Corporate Plan is on three priorities:

- **ECONOMY** - Building a strong economy
- **PEOPLE** - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone
- **PLACE** - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work

Bringing empty homes back into use contributes to all three of these priorities as well as assisting the Council to contribute to three of the seven wellbeing goals that 'The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' puts in place as follows:

1. A healthier Wales
2. A prosperous Wales
3. A Wales of cohesive communities

Investment in housing provides an ongoing stimulus to the local economy, by supporting the construction industry and local supply chains. Making available a supply of affordable homes also helps to improve the prosperity of residents and helps support a huge range of households in society that may not otherwise be able to meet their needs in the market, thereby promoting independence and positive lives for all.

1.2 National Context

According to Welsh Government statistics, there are an estimated 1.4 million dwellings in Wales as of 31st March 2016. During 2016-2017 23,303 of these had been vacant for more than six months. Of these, 255 were brought back into use in 2017-18.¹ Empty homes represent a wasted resource, financial expense and in many cases a missed opportunity to provide much needed affordable housing for people in Wales. Not only are they a waste of a valuable housing resource, but they can cause blight to communities and distress to residents affected by their unsightly appearance and propensity to attract crime, vandals and anti social behaviour. In addition to this, living next door to an empty home can devalue a home by as much as 18% and unsightly homes deter investment in an area and leads to a more general cycle of decline.²

For many years, demand for housing in Wales has outstripped supply. This extra necessity for housing is driven by an increase in households, a growing population and changing demographics. The Welsh Government has an ambitious target of delivery an additional 20,000 new affordable homes by 2021. Whilst this target relates to new build homes, it is acknowledged that better utilisation of the existing housing stock can help ease some of the burden to delivering these new homes whilst also acting as a catalyst for area regeneration and community sustainability. Studies have also shown that the average cost of returning empty homes to a habitable state is between £6,000 and £12,000 per property.³ This supports the statement that “bringing empty homes back into use not only provides much needed

¹ Source: Welsh Government

² Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors

³ Chartered Institute of Housing – Information leaflet

affordable housing, but can also be a more economically viable option to new build”.

⁴ For this reason, the Welsh Government has set an equally ambitious target of 5000 empty homes to be brought back into use across Wales in the same period and RCT is required to contribute to this target.

1.3 Local Context

Rhondda Cynon Taf is the second largest authority in Wales with a population of 234,410 and 105,269 dwellings. ⁵ Of these dwellings, 92,197 are in the private sector (either owner occupied or privately rented). As at April 2017, 3.8% of Rhondda Cynon Taf’s private housing stock was empty which equates to 3556 empty homes. The average for Wales is 2.4% with the lowest (Torfaen) having 0.78% of their stock empty.

As shown in Figure 1, 59% of homes that were empty as at 1st April 2017 had been vacant for less than three years, whilst just over 13% had been vacant for over 6 years. However, although this most recent snapshot provides a useful reference point, trend data provides a much more reliable overview of the longer term situation.

An analysis of four annual empty homes snapshots was carried out from 1st April 2014 to 2017. In total, only 684 homes (9% of the total) appeared on all four successive snapshots (i.e. in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017) and 1,351 homes (18% of the total) appeared on 2 consecutive snapshots before ceasing to feature on future data collections. Most significantly, 4,463 homes (60% of the total) appeared on one of the snapshots in four years. Whilst many of these homes were empty for longer than a single year, they were not empty for so long as to span two annual data collections and can therefore be considered ‘transactional’. In other words, the bulk of homes recorded over the last four years have only been empty for short periods before returning back into use through purchase or rental. Conversely, only a minority of homes (6%) were re-recorded as empty again after being brought back into use over this period.

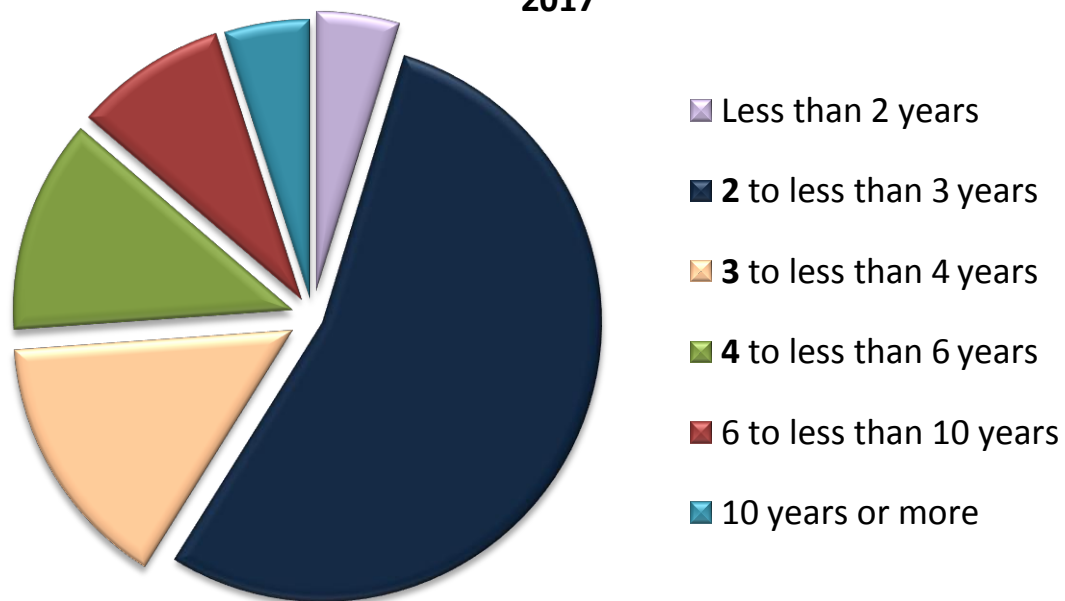
This data reveals some interesting trends to help illuminate the related problems in the County Borough. Firstly, 684 empty homes have now been identified as having

⁴ Empty Homes Agency (2016)

⁵ Source: Welsh Government key statistics

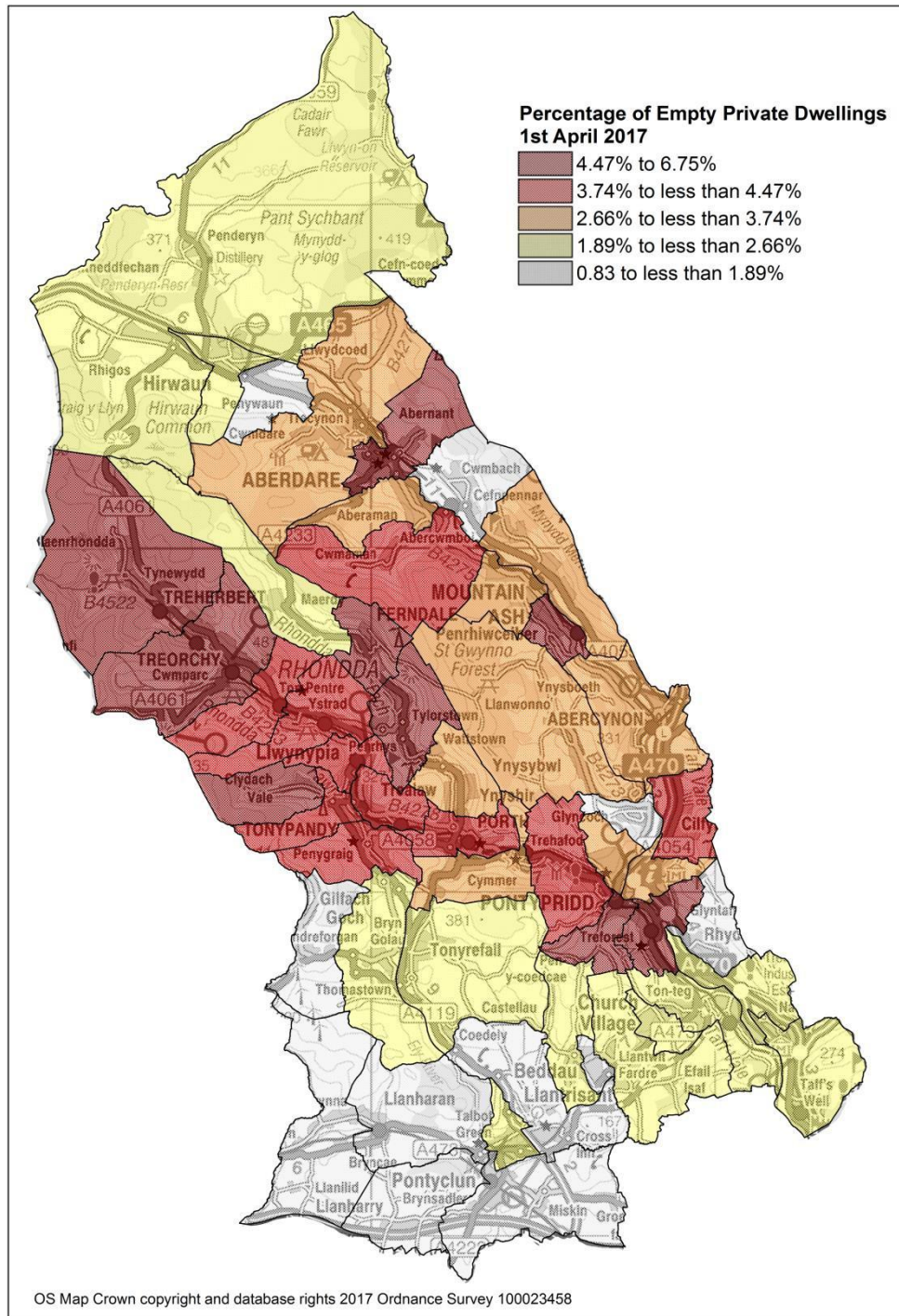
appeared on all four snapshots without returning into beneficial use. These are likely to be some of the most problematic empty homes in the County Borough, although they are a relatively minor element of the overall issue. Appendix 2 shows the location of these 684 'long term' empty homes. Secondly, whilst RCT does have amongst the highest numbers of empty homes in Wales at any given point, this is primarily due to level of 'churn' in the housing market, rather than persistent long term empty homes.

Figure 1: Long Term Empty Property Void Time as at 1st April 2017



To consider this information at a more localised level, Figure 2 depicts the percentage of all dwellings that were long term empty homes on 1st April 2017 at ward level. This was enabled by comparing council tax records to housing stock from the Local Land and Property Gazetteer. This provides a useful representative comparison of private sector empty homes between areas, which is not otherwise enabled by looking at the quantity of homes alone.

Figure 2: Percentages of Private Sector Empty Homes by Ward



Looking at the number of empty homes as a percentage of the total housing stock, enables us to pinpoint the areas that are worst affected. Whilst there are empty homes throughout the whole of Rhondda Cynon Taf, analysis shows that in the most recent snapshot, the issue is most acute within several parts of the Rhondda. The

percentages are generally not so high in Cynon and only one area (Penrhiwceiber) displayed comparable levels to parts of the Rhondda Valleys. Conversely, most of Taf has a particularly low proportion of long term empty homes, with most areas typically containing less than 2% on average. This is perhaps unsurprising with demand for properties being significantly higher in Taf, although, equally, empty properties within this area tend to be empty for reasons other than low demand (i.e. inheritance, sentimental reasons, and probate) and are thus more difficult to return to beneficial use. The only area that particularly bucks the trend is Treforest (5%), which is predictable given the lower demand for student accommodation in the private rented sector because of the increase in student rent provided directly by the University.⁶

2. Challenges to bringing empty homes back into use.

There are a number of different and sometimes localised reasons why homes become empty, some of which are:

2.1 Lack of local demand for homes

Although the current housing market has resulted in a decline in the numbers of people being able to buy or rent a property, dwellings still remain empty in areas even where there are potential occupiers. Research shows that this is because there are too many similar homes for sale in the same locality and there is not sufficient variety in the localised housing market.

2.2 Housing market conditions

According to the latest UK housing market survey, eight of the 10 cheapest places to buy a house in the UK are in the South Wales valleys. This has led to speculative investment purchases in areas where there is little demand or an over supply of similar, usually family, terraced properties. Local knowledge suggests that in areas of low demand many homes are sold via auction and to purchasers who do not know the area or understand the local market. Empty homes are often bought without being viewed because buyers are attracted by the low price. These new owners are

⁶ Local Housing Market Assessment

then unprepared for instances of unseen refurbishment work or low demand and may not have the resources or intentions to invest in the property further and this results in homes remaining empty for longer. It can further lead to a situation where properties are “land banked” and left vacant waiting for an upturn in the housing market which may never materialise.

2.3 Owner inertia

For some owners, maximising income from their asset is not a high priority. Equally, an owner may lack the necessary knowledge or skills to refurbish or manage a property, but still be unwilling to sell. There may also be disputes regarding inheritance which require the outcome of a legal remedy before rent or sale can be considered. Furthermore, a number of homes can remain empty due to personal or sentimental reasons.

2.4 Poor condition of empty homes

High quantities of homes are also empty due to their dilapidated condition. Research indicates that many owners are unable to carry out the necessary remedial works required to bring them up to an acceptable standard because of a lack of funds. These homes will remain empty until the essential works have been completed.

3. Housing Need

3.1 Local Housing Market Assessment

The Welsh Government defines housing need as:

“Households lacking their own housing or living in housing which is inadequate or unsuitable, who are unlikely to be able to meet their housing needs in the housing market without assistance”.

Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC has identified an overall shortfall in affordable housing units, as well as a predicted future increase in housing need. The most recent Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) undertaken in 2017 has identified a need for 738 new affordable homes each year between 2017-18 and 2022-23.

The LHMA also indicated that most people want to live in existing communities. In addition to this, it found that new build activity in many areas of the borough is not sufficient in itself in some areas to meet demand, which reinforces the need for investment in the existing housing stock. It is therefore evident that new build developments alone will not sufficiently meet demand. The LHMA also identified differences in average house prices and affordability in Rhondda Cynon Taf between the Northern and Southern parts of the County Borough, and as previously stated there is also an imbalance in supply and demand.

3.2 Homelessness

Homelessness prevention work has resulted in a significant decrease in homeless applications over the last decade. Prevention is where a local authority takes positive action to provide housing assistance to someone who the authority considers is threatened with homelessness within 56 days. However, despite the general decrease, a large number of people are still presenting themselves as homeless and in the current housing market and economic climate; this trend is set to continue.

In 2016-17 in Rhondda Cynon Taf 567 homelessness presentations were made of which 78 were deemed to be priority cases which the council had a statutory duty to re-house. In addition, 357 households were successfully prevented from homelessness by the authority taking positive preventative action.⁷

Bringing empty homes back into use could contribute to meeting the needs of homelessness households, by increasing the housing supply and also providing the local authority with nomination rights where incentives, such as grant assistance have been provided.

4. The Financial Cost of Empty Homes

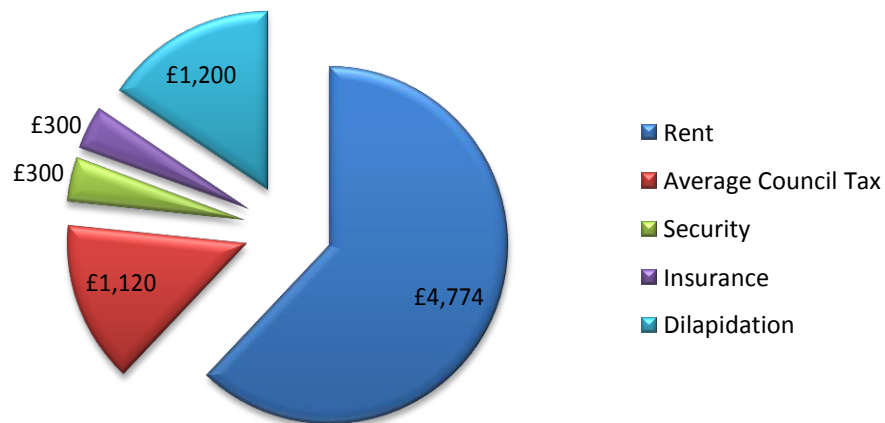
4.1 Cost Implications for Owners of Empty Homes

Not only are long term empty homes a drain on council resources and a wasted resource in a time of meeting housing need, they are a cost burden on the owner of

⁷Source: Welsh Government

the property. Fig 3 shows that owning an empty dwelling cost the owner an average of £7,100 per annum. The rental loss is based on the Local Housing Allowance of £91.81 for a 3 bed house and the council tax loss equates to the Council Tax rate for a band A property.

Figure 3: Average Annual Cost to Owners of Empty Homes in RCT



5. Enforcement Solutions and Legislative Framework

As already mentioned, invariably, empty homes can be neglected and can fall into disrepair. Where other informal approaches to owners have failed to bring about improvements, service of legal remedies are considered.

The main options that are available to Councils include:

- **Building Act 1984. Sections 77-79**

This legislation allows the Council to require the owner of a building to carry out remedial works or demolish a building or structure if it is considered to be in a dangerous condition. If the owner fails to comply, the Council may carry out the works in default and recover the expenses reasonably incurred. This option is used in instances where the property is in a ruinous or dilapidated condition and is seriously detrimental to the amenities of the neighbourhood. The provision only

addresses the external appearance of the building and therefore can be of limited benefit to the overall regeneration and reuse of the property.

- **Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 215**

Requires owners and occupiers to remedy their properties if they fail to maintain them and they are considered seriously detrimental to the amenities of the neighbourhood. The scope of this legislation is wide ranging and it is for the Council to interpret its use.

- **Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 Section 29**

Where a property is not effectively secured against unauthorised entry or is likely to become a danger to public health and is unoccupied or the occupier is absent from it, the Council can take action. It may secure the property or take steps to prevent it become a danger to public health.

- **Environmental Protection Act 1990, Sections 79-81.**

This act allows the Council to require the abatement of statutory nuisance. This may be applied to a range of issues that affect empty homes, including the accumulation of rubbish or ingress of water, affecting neighbouring homes. The Council can serve an abatement notice on the owners requiring works to abate the nuisance, and if necessary carry the work out in default.

- **Housing Act 2004**

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System is a risk based assessment of the potential risks to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings. Several enforcement options exist, including emergencies measures, dependant on the severity of the assessment outcome.

Empty Dwelling Management Orders are also available and could be considered for long-term empty homes as a last resort against un-cooperative property owners. The rental income would repay the Council costs associated with enforcing the order and managing the property for a period of up to 7 years. At the end of the lease the habitable property would be handed back to the owner. This procedure would only be practical in areas of housing need and would require a housing association

partner to provide the management as the Council does not have any of its own housing stock.

Demolition orders can be made on houses that are not suitable for habitation. Where a number of poor houses are identified in one area and where it is considered that such action will assist in the wider regeneration of an area, the Council has powers to clear a number at once. These powers can be used for empty houses.

- **Housing Act 1985, Section 17**

If an owner refuses to bring a home back into use and the property is having a degenerative effect on the area, the Council has powers to compulsory purchase. This procedure could be considered where the Council identifies a future purposed use for the building.

- **Law of Property Act 1925, Section 103**

Exercising the power of sale of an empty property where money is owed to the Council: for example as a result of the Council having to step in to undertake remedial works in default of an owner. The Council has a Policy for the use of this power which highlights the need to ensure appropriate methods for disposal of homes so that local people are encouraged and able to buy them at market value, or otherwise that a housing association partner is able to purchase the homes for re-use as affordable housing.

6. Recent Activity

6.1 Proactive Approaches

6.1.1 Empty Homes Officers

Over the last few years, the Council has increased its proactive approach to dealing with empty homes and now has two Empty Homes Officers working full time to tackle the issue. A comprehensive database of empty homes is kept, based on Council tax records and any property which has been empty for more than six months as at 1st April is captured on this database, in conjunction with other known long term empty

homes. Part of the remit of the Empty Homes Officer is to identify ownership and legal responsibility of problematic empty homes, and to work with the owners or their estates to bring these back into use. Any direct actions taken by the Council or its partners on its behalf, which can lead to individual dwellings, being returned to occupation is recorded and the database is used to provide yearly performance indicator statistics and to monitor performance.

The types of interventions that these officers undertake are as follows:

- proactively identifying and surveying empty homes
- serving notices on owners of empty homes where they are having a detrimental impact.
- undertaking works in default (including demolition)
- securing empty homes
- enforced sales where the Council has secured a debt against an empty home
- providing advice and information

6.1.2 Raising Awareness

In order to raise awareness of the empty homes problem within RCT, a number of publicity and educational initiatives have also been employed. It is recognised that increased awareness of the issue can help identify properties of concern to residents and also encourage the owners to come forward and seek advice and guidance. To date, these initiatives have included the following:

- Publicising activities through the use of social media and newspaper articles, local radio and Council and Local Health Authority newsletter articles.
- Presentations and displays to strategic partnership groups, Councillors, Community First Clusters and the general public.
- The development of promotional literature such as leaflets and a comprehensive empty home owner information pack.
- The development of a dedicated empty homes web page.
- The issue of questionnaires to owners of empty homes and residents affected by the issues.

6.2 Funding Options

The Council has a number of funding options available to owners of empty homes to encourage them to be brought back into use. The options recognise that apart from encouraging home owners to utilise their asset, the commercial sector also represents a particular area where properties are underused along with the residential upper floors of retail premises.

6.2.1 Homes above Retail Premises

A recent survey by the Federation of Master Builders estimated that in the UK as a whole, as many as 300,000 to 400,000 new homes could be created by making use of empty spaces above shops. The Council has undertaken a number of approaches to bringing this empty space in town centres back into beneficial use.

The HARPS scheme has been enabled through the Welsh Governments' Vibrant and Viable Places programme. This initiative has focussed on the opportunities provided by the previously untapped housing market in Pontypridd Town Centre. Pontypridd has consistently been identified as one of the areas of high housing demand within the borough and there is a distinct shortage of one and two bedroom units; yet the town centre offers very little scope to develop affordable housing to meet this demand. To date, 24 units of accommodation have been provided through this approach.

There is also provision in the Council's Private Sector Renewal Policy (which identifies the Council's priorities for housing capital investment), to provide Flats over Shops grants to provide residential accommodation in town centre locations.

6.2.2 Empty Property Grant

In 2016 the Council, using its own capital funding launched an Empty Property Grant scheme which provides a grant of up to £20,000 for residents who wish to renovate an empty property they have purchased. To date the Council has invested £4.1million in this scheme. It is estimated that this initiative and total investment will bring back into use in the region of 200 empty homes over the next two to three years.

6.2.3 Houses into Homes Loan

The Houses into Homes Loan is a Welsh Government funded scheme which provides a loan to help return privately owned empty homes into use. The scheme is managed by the Council. These loans are not available for potential owner occupiers and are designed for applicants who want to rent or sell their property on completion of the refurbishment works. The loan must be repaid on sale or within 2 years from the date of loan approval, whichever is sooner, or within 3 years from the date of the loan approval if the property is for rent.

The Houses into Homes Loan has proved to be very popular with landlords and investors with the Council processing over £1.8m of Houses into Homes loans since 2012. This has provided 84 units of accommodation up to December 2017.

6.2.4 Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is classed as housing that is provided for sale or rent at below open market prices and where there are secure mechanisms in place to ensure that it is accessible to those who cannot afford market housing. Recent research has suggested that many people looking for affordable housing want to live in existing communities. This is evidenced by the council's "Homestep" low cost home ownership register and historical demand for assistance to purchase existing properties and not just new build. Providing low cost homeownership in existing communities can also help to 're-balance' housing markets in areas where this is a high level of rented accommodation.

Initially, Rhondda Cynon Taf was successful in obtaining funding from the Heads of the Valleys initiative to implement an innovative and unique scheme called Homestep Plus. The scheme provided funding for a registered Social Landlord partner (in this instance Cynon Taf Community Housing Group) to purchase a number of empty homes, from owners of existing empty homes, for sale to first time buyers on a 30% shared equity basis. The properties were refurbished before being sold and the equity share in each property was recycled on future sales to facilitate further phases of the scheme. Between 2010 and 2016, 14 empty homes were brought back into use via this initiative.

Since 2015, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and United Welsh Housing Association have worked together to deliver a new Homestep Plus scheme with funding from the Welsh Government's Vibrant and Viable Places programme. The scheme enables United Welsh to identify and buy empty homes in the CF37 postcode area and to refurbish them before offering them for sale at 70% of the asking price. Alternatively, residents can identify their own property, which United Welsh will purchase on their behalf and sell on at the discounted price. Funding is available to purchase 24 homes up until March 2019, and as with the previous scheme, monies accrued on future sales will be recycled to facilitate additional purchases.

6.2.5 Targeted Community Approaches

It is recognised that there are communities, particularly in the north of the borough, where there are persistently high levels of empty homes. These communities also experience high levels of social deprivation coupled with poor quality housing across all tenures. This situation can often deter people from moving into these areas and also discourages people from staying; thus leading to a high turn over of homes, especially in the private rented sector, and a subsequent increase in the numbers of empty homes.

The implementation of a Housing and Health Action Area was successfully piloted in Tylorstown during February 2015. The over-arching aim was to improve housing, health and prosperity through specific housing interventions.

Within this context, work began to categorise and take action with regards to empty homes in the Tylorstown area according to their condition and need for possible enforcement action. As a result of this 62 empty homes were brought back into use following council contact, intervention or enforcement action. This was despite the very challenging local housing market. However, whilst the initiative brought back into use 62 empty homes, during this time a different 73 became vacant. A targeted housing project has also been undertaken in Treforest over the last two years and has identified similar issues in that despite the project bringing 93 empty homes back into use, Council Tax records show that a further 92 different homes are now empty in the ward.

This reinforces the notion that measures focussed on selective communities, need to be delivered in the context of a wider strategic approach that will improve the overall “outlook” for the communities and tackle some of the more macro issues that these communities are affected by.

6.2.6 Advice, Education and Information

It was acknowledged that there is scope for the Council to proactively assist the market by focussing on the most problematic empty homes as well as those that can be most effectively used for affordable housing in the higher demand areas of the borough. Equally, a number of less problematic empty homes may also be brought back into use through the provision of advice and “education”. This has led to the production of a comprehensive information pack for owners of empty homes in RCT. The pack contains advice on a multitude of options what are available to owners to enable them to better utilise their asset. The pack covers issues such as selling the empty house, purchase advice, letting or renting the house, advice on how to become a landlord and how to advertise your property, advice on refurbishment, private finance, and tax relief/reductions and outlines the legal enforcement procedures applicable to empty homes.

6.2.7 Dedicated Web Page

In addition to the initiatives outlined above, Rhondda Cynon Taf has also developed a dedicated empty homes web page, which provides information on the Houses into Homes Grant and the Empty Property Grant, plus information on Homestep Plus and general help and guidance to landlords wishing to bring their house back into use. Below is the link to the “Making Homes in RCT” web-page.

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/Housing/Housing.aspx>

6.3 Performance

Over the last four years the Council has brought back into use 651 homes through direct action, loan or grant aid. Just under 1500 interventions on empty homes have taken place over this period to provide advice, serve notices or secure empty homes.

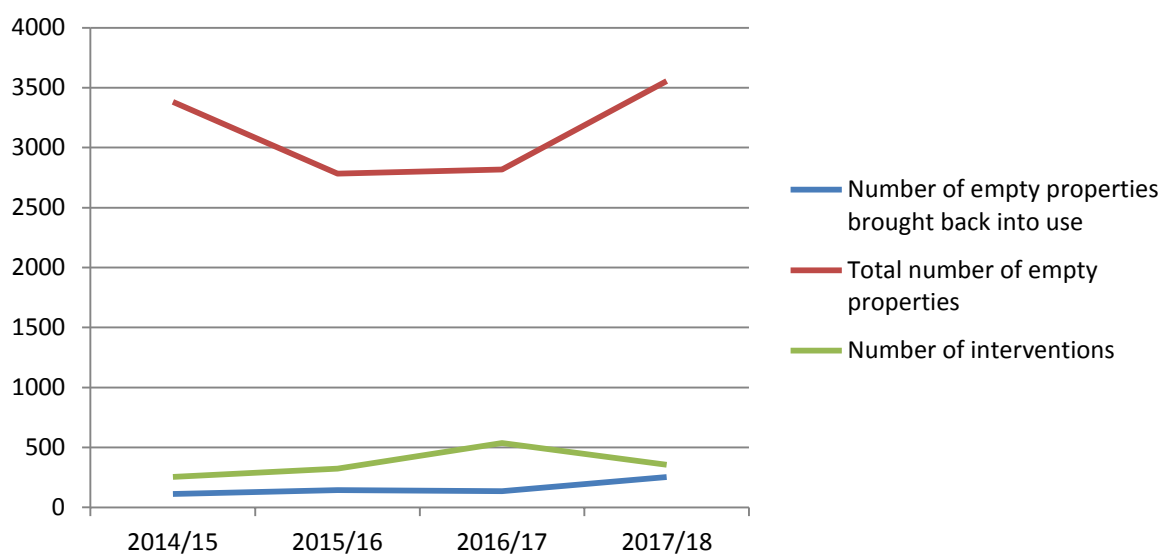
The latest analysis in 2017-18 identified that there are 3556 private sector empty homes in Rhondda Cynon Taf. As per Performance Indicator definition PAM13, this figure consists of the Council Tax exemption classes of, A, C F, G, L and Q but excludes homes under renovation and homes classed as second homes (furnished). It also does not include houses taken out of Council Tax banding because they are deemed to be uninhabitable, or commercial empty properties.

There are two figures which are relevant to the Performance Indicator; the number of empty homes and the number of empty homes returned to use. The Council's performance over the last four years is detailed in the table below.

Figure 4: Council performance in relation to empty homes

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Total
% of empty homes brought back into use	3.37%	5.17%	4.9%	5.74%	-
Number of empty homes brought back into use	114	144	138	204	600
Total number of empty homes	3381	2785	2818	3556	-
Number of interventions	255	324	536	356	1471

Figure 5: Comparison of Council Performance by year



It should be noted that Rhondda Cynon Taf only counts empty homes that have been brought back into use as a consequence of direct action by the Council e.g. enforcement or financial assistance in accordance with the national performance indicator definition. This definition was changed for 2017/18 both in terms of the type of empty homes that can be counted and the type of action. This has meant that the council's total number of empty homes appears to have grown significantly between 2016-17 and 2017-18. However, the two data sets are not strictly comparable because of the change in the types of empty home that can be counted. The graph does however demonstrate the gradual improvement each year in the total number of empty homes that have been brought back into use per year both in real terms and as a percentage. Notably, in 2017-18 less interventions resulted in more homes being brought back into use, perhaps evidence of the benefits of a more targeted approach.

7. Strategic Aims

Whilst it is acknowledged that good progress has been made in bringing empty homes back into use in RCT over the last few years, the scale of the problem still persists and continues to present problems in many communities. Despite lots of activity and empty homes being brought back into use, often the overall total number of empty homes in the borough at any one time remains relatively static i.e as one empty home is brought back into use, another falls empty.

As such, a strong strategic approach is required which has objectives that are clear, deliverable and will make a difference to both the scale of empty homes that are brought back into use as well as having a more fundamental impact on the total number in order to reverse the trend in a sustainable way.

The strategic aims are:

1. To develop partnerships and vehicles that will enable an increase in the scale of empty homes being brought back into use

Drawing on best practice elsewhere, the Council will actively engage with housing associations, private sector partners, community groups and other stakeholders in the community, to identify new models and vehicles to increase the scale of empty homes that are brought back into use.

Responsibilities for the various interventions and approaches for empty homes are shared across two departments in the Council. The 'Housing Grants and Strategy Team' located with the Regeneration and Planning department is responsible for overall delivery of the strategy, developing an action plan and monitoring outcomes. It is also responsible for developing and delivering funding models and any other vehicles designed to bring empty homes back into use. Meanwhile, the Council's 'Housing Standards Team' located with the Public Health and Protection department is responsible for the provision of advice, assistance and enforcement activity.

Good communication and clarity of roles and responsibilities is vital to ensuring the successful delivery of the aims of this strategy. As such, an Empty Homes Steering Group will be established to co-ordinate delivery of the strategy and associated activity. The Steering Group will include representatives from Housing Grants, Housing Strategy, the Housing Standards Team, Regeneration and Planning and other partners as required

2. To maximise the use of current funding and identify further funding models to increase the number of empty homes that are brought back into use

The Council will continue to make available and ensure effective management of grants and loans schemes to facilitate owners (subject to funding) to bring their empty homes back into beneficial use. The Council will also prioritise identifying further funding opportunities that can be levered into the borough for this purpose.

3. To continue to use a range of interventions to ensure all types of empty home are targeted and enabled to be brought back into use and monitor the outcomes related to these closely.

The Council will continue to encourage or enforce the improvement or conversion of empty homes to increase the supply and choice of housing across RCT. Priority will be given to those properties which have the greatest detriment to the surrounding community and/or those properties which can most effectively be returned to use in terms of contributing usefully to housing supply.

The Council's dedicated web page "Making Homes in RCT" is currently being updated to include all relevant options for owners of empty homes to consider. This will include an option for local residents to "report" an empty home which will allow the Empty Homes Officers to target individual properties and to offer advice and assistance to bring the property back into use as soon as possible.

4. To undertake further research in communities and evaluation of existing schemes to understand why there are a high number of empty homes and identify possible solutions that could prevent homes from becoming empty.

The Council, in its strategic housing role will undertake further research to understand why some areas are blighted by empty homes, taking into consideration both the 'micro' and 'macro' reasons. It is possible that empty homes in some communities are a symptom of other issues, rather than the problem in itself and undertaking in depth research into the housing market and other social economic factors might help to identify more innovative solutions and approaches to the problem. The trend based data will continue to be analysed to assist in the targeting of interventions.

5. To identify possible solutions that could prevent homes from becoming empty and also develop interventions for different market areas and types

The Council will ensure that in its five identified Strategic Opportunity Areas the opportunities to bring private sector empty homes back into use is maximised. In addition, major infrastructure projects are an instrument for kick-starting regeneration with train stations, and their surrounding environments, increasingly seen as the steer for regeneration programmes. The development of the South East Wales Metro, as part of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, provides such an opportunity. The Metro will focus on modernising the core valley lines resulting in far more frequent and faster trains into and out of Cardiff from. This could therefore result in renewed and increased demand for housing in some areas where the housing market has been affected by depopulation in recent years which would have a positive impact on the number of empty homes. Increases in tourism could also present an opportunity to encourage the re-use of empty homes.

This approach to prevention will also include an evaluation of existing schemes to ensure the impact of those schemes is effective; development of new schemes and identification of approaches to both prevent homes from becoming empty and manage low demand effectively.

8. Action Plan and Monitoring

An annual action plan will be developed to deliver and drive forward the aims of this Strategy and ensure that the Council's ambitions related to decreasing the number of empty homes in the borough are met. It will be monitored quarterly and performance will be measured against it, and relevant local and national indicators.

Appendix 1: Case Studies

Case Study 1: Houses into Homes Loan

The Forest Hotel, Treforest, Pontypridd:

Houses to Homes loan was awarded in June 2015 for £150,000 for the conversion of a former public house which closed and became empty in November 2010 to 5 self contained 2 bedroom flats and a 3 bedroom residential dwelling. This scheme also attracted additional private sector leverage of £191,250.



Case Study 2: Homestep Plus

Property in CF37 area after refurbishment works. This property had previously remained empty for over 2 years.



Case Study 3: Treforest Targeted Approach

This property was the longest standing empty property in Treforest and had been empty since 2001. Advice was given to the owner regarding condition of property. The property is now refurbished ready for sale and on the market. The Council's intervention helped by encouraging the owner to do something with the property rather than face legal action.

Before



After



Appendix 2 – Location of 684 ‘Long Term’ Empty Homes

Ward	Number of empty homes appearing in 2014,2015, 2016 and 2017 snapshot	Percentage of Total
Beddau	1	0.15
Llanharan	1	0.15
Pen-y-waun	1	0.15
Rhydfelen Central/Ilan	1	0.15
Tyn-y-nant	1	0.15
Llanharry	2	0.29
Llantrisant Town	2	0.29
Talbot Green	2	0.29
Llantwit Fardre	3	0.44
Rhigos	3	0.44
Church Village	4	0.58
Cwmbach	4	0.58
Glyncoch	4	0.58
Llwyn-y-pia	4	0.58
Gilfach Goch	5	0.73
Pont-y-clun	5	0.73
Rhondda	5	0.73
Ton-teg	5	0.73
Brynna	6	0.88
Tonyrefail East	6	0.88
Graig	7	1.02
Hawthorn	7	1.02
Mountain Ash East	8	1.17
Pontypridd Town	9	1.32
Cilfynydd	10	1.46
Tonyrefail West	11	1.61
Hirwaun	12	1.75
Ynysybwl	12	1.75
Trallwng	13	1.90
Ynyshir	13	1.90
Maerdy	15	2.19
Porth	15	2.19
Pen-y-graig	16	2.34
Tonypandy	16	2.34
Trealaw	16	2.34
Treforest	16	2.34
Ystrad	18	2.63

Aberaman North	19	2.78
Aberdare West/Llwydcoed	19	2.78
Cymmer	20	2.92
Mountain Ash West	21	3.07
Abercynon	22	3.22
Aberaman South	26	3.80
Ferndale	27	3.95
Cwm Clydach	29	4.24
Aberdare East	30	4.39
Pentre	33	4.82
Penrhiwceiber	36	5.26
Tylorstown	36	5.26
Treorchy	43	6.29
Treherbert	44	6.43
Grand Total	684	100

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APPENDIX B: Empty Homes Action Plan (January 2019 – March 2020)

Empty Homes Action Plan: January 2019 – December 2019

Strategic Objective 1	To develop partnerships and vehicles that will enable an increase in the scale of empty properties being brought back into use				
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Progress
Establish an Empty Homes Operational Group (EHOG) to deliver the aims and objectives of the Empty Property Strategy	Seek approval for establishment of group and develop Terms of Reference and membership	Group set up and attended by members	First convened on 15/11/18	Housing Strategy	Empty Homes Operational group set up and chaired by Housing Strategy. Terms of reference and membership complete.
	Coordinate EHOG meetings every quarter in order to implement and monitor the delivery of the first year action plan	Key stakeholders embrace and deliver the strategic aims and objectives	Ongoing	Housing Strategy	5 meetings have taken place to date. The meetings have been a successful method of co-ordinating the aims and objectives of the strategy.
Liaise with speculative investors who wish to acquire properties within RCT to let to members of the public	Continue to organise the RCT Landlord Forum, setting agendas, booking venues for meetings and collating minutes.	The number of members attending the Landlord forums. Feedback from the landlords attending the meetings.	Ongoing	Housing Strategy	3 Forums have taken place with an average of 40 Landlords in attendance.
	Attend RCT Landlord Forum to present Houses into Homes loans scheme	Increase in the number of Houses into Homes loan applications	May 2019	Housing Strategy	104 grants have now been approved. 56 have been approved since April 2018.
	Maintain database of empty property investors	Increase in the number of empty property referrals to investors	Ongoing	Public Health and Protection	The number of referrals is not currently recorded.

Strategic Objective 2					
To maximise the use of current funding and identify further funding models to increase the number of empty properties that are brought back into use					
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Progress
Identify and engage with empty property owners to investigate ways of returning empty homes back into use	To continue to provide Empty Homes Grants to assist owners to renovate long term empty properties by promoting the scheme through posters/fliers and the council website.	Increase in the percentage of empty properties brought back into use	Ongoing	Housing Strategy and Grants	During the financial year 2018/2019 102 empty home grant applications were received with 88 (86%) approved . By the end of the financial year, 61 (69%) of cases were complete, the remaining 27 cases were rolled over into the 2019/2020 programme
Deliver the Homestep Plus Scheme	To continue to work with United Welsh to deliver Homestep Plus scheme in CF37 area	Target of 24 properties purchased and sold under Homestep Plus Scheme	Ongoing	Housing Strategy	17 properties have been purchased and 16 have been sold to first time buyers.
	Explore opportunities to deliver Homestep Plus in other areas of RCT	Areas identified to deliver Homestep Plus	March 2020	Housing Strategy	May need to seek extension of scheme.
Identify suitable empty properties and buildings in town centres and key settlements that could utilise funding	Map empty properties in priority regeneration town centres	Empty properties in regeneration town centres identified	Dec-19	Housing Strategy	Empty properties have been mapped for Porth. All empty properties are mapped on MapInfo however this does not include commercial empty properties.
	Identify suitable funding opportunities for mapped empty properties	Analysis undertaken of potential funding for each empty property	March-20	Housing Strategy	

Strategic Objective 3					
To continue to use a range of interventions to ensure all types of empty properties are targeted and enabled to be brought back into use and monitor the outcomes related to these closely					
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Progress
A commitment to use appropriate enforcement powers where suitable	Develop an enforcement approach to deal with owners of empty properties who do not voluntarily engage in the opportunities available to bring their properties back into use	Increase in the use of enforced sales, compulsory purchase and empty dwelling management orders and a subsequent reduction in the number of problem dwellings within RCT	March-20	EHOOG	11 properties have had enforcement notices served since priority empty property visits have taken place. There are a further possible properties which are being considered.
		Decrease in the number of complaints received regarding empty properties	Ongoing	Public Health and Protection	Report needs to be set up to record this.
	Establish a more proactive and targeted approach to enforcement	Decrease in the number of empty properties	March-20	Public Health and Protection	The target set by the group was to deliver interventions within the first year to 171 (25%) of the long-term empty properties. Target has been exceeded with 276 (40%) receiving targeted intervention.
Provide up to date advice and assistance to bring empty properties back into use	Establish an Empty Homes webpage to include an empty property market place where sellers can advertise and buyers make direct contact	Number of web page visits	March-20	EPOG	Meeting to be set up with Marketing and Customer Service Teams

Empty Homes Action Plan: January 2019 – December 2019

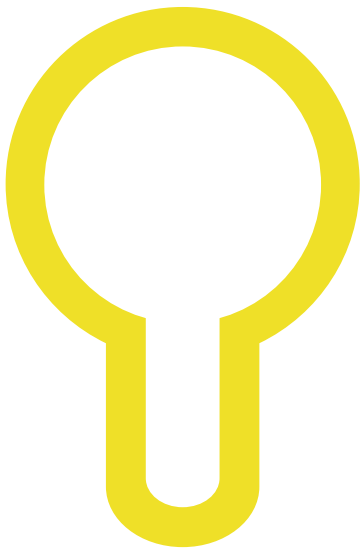
	Produce an Empty Property Advice Pack for empty property owners	Number of empty properties brought back into use	Nov-19	EPOG	First draft of pack has been produced and is currently with Design and Print for minor amendments.
	Promotion of Empty Property Advice pack	Empty Property Advice pack available on Council's webpage	Dec-19	Housing Strategy	
		Empty Property Advice pack available on Empty Homes webpage	March-20	Housing Strategy	
		Promotion of Empty Property Advice pack on Council's Facebook page	Dec-19	Housing Strategy	
	Develop online reporting of an empty property and a dedicated empty property inbox	Number of empty properties reported on line via Council's website	Marc-20	Housing Strategy	

Strategic Objective 4	To undertake further research in communities and evaluation of existing schemes to understand why there are a high number of empty properties and identify possible solutions that could prevent properties from becoming empty				
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Progress
Share best practice with other local authorities/WG	Investigate benchmarking opportunities	Better understanding of empty property problem within RCT and neighbouring authorities	March-20	Housing Strategy	
	Roll out of Empty Homes Grant to Valleys Task Force	Number of empty home brought back into use across the 9 LA's that make up the Valleys Taskforce	October 2019 – launch month	Housing Grants	Announcement made by the Deputy Minister on 30 th October to launch the scheme.
Maintain and monitor the Empty Property database	Record and report on the number of empty properties brought back into use through direct action by the Council	Increase in the number of interventions undertaken	Ongoing	Housing Strategy/Public Health and Protection	In 2018/2019 RCT brought a total of 213 (7.4%) empty homes back into use, directly from Council intervention, performing 2.8% above the National Welsh Average . This is a 2% increase on the previous year.
		Increase in the number of empty properties brought back into use through interventions undertaken	Ongoing	Housing Strategy/Public Health and Protection	National benchmarking data for 2018/2019 also ranks RCT 1st in Wales for the number of empty homes brought back into use and 6th in Wales for the percentage . This is an improvement from the 2017/2018 data that ranked RCT 2nd place for

					the number of empty homes brought back into use and 8th place for the percentage .
	Report empty property PI to Welsh Government	Benchmark performance at an All Wales level	Ongoing	Housing Strategy	Council tax records show that between 2017/2018 and 2018/2019, the number of empty homes across the borough has reduced from 3,556 to 2,885 , a reduction of 671 properties.
Identify the reason why the number of empty properties remains relatively static in RCT	Undertake research to identify the reasons why the same number of empty properties become empty in certain areas	Solutions identified to target the trend of properties becoming vacant	March-20	Housing Strategy	

Strategic Objective 5	To identify possible solutions that could prevent properties from becoming empty and also develop interventions for different market areas and types				
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Progress
Explore opportunities for Area Based Regeneration	Identify next area to deliver the Health and Housing Action Area scheme	Area identified	March-20	Housing Strategy	

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF

EMPTY PROPERTY

ADVICE PACK



“Realise your empty property’s potential”



RHONDDA CYNON TAF



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INTRODUCTION

Empty properties represent a wasted resource, financial expense and in many cases a missed opportunity to provide much needed affordable housing for people. Not only are they a waste of a valuable housing resource, but they can cause blight to communities and distress to residents affected by their unsightly appearance and tendency to attract crime, vandals and anti-social behaviour. In addition to this, they can devalue neighbouring properties and represent a huge cost to the Council, Police, Fire Authority and Community Safety Partnerships due to the time and resources spent in dealing with the problems that they create.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council wishes to work with empty property owners to encourage them to bring their properties back into use and where possible, prevent properties from becoming empty in the first instance.

There are a number of initiatives available to help owners bring their empty property back into use and this pack is intended to give you an overview of those initiatives. Contact details are provided for further information.

GRANTS & LOANS

Landlord Loan

Interest free loans are available to assist with the renovation and improvement of single empty properties or the conversion of an empty property into a number of units so they are suitable for use as residential accommodation. These loans are only suitable for applicants who want to rent or sell the property upon completion of the works.

The eligibility criteria includes:

- Property must have been empty for a minimum of 6 months
- An application fee is applicable
- Minimum of £1,000 and maximum of £25,000 loan per unit
- Maximum 80% Loan to Value based on the current value of the property and including any other charges, mortgages, loans etc.
- Maximum total loan value of £250,000 per recipient at any time
- Loan secured against the property as first or second charge
- Loan must be repaid within 2 years if the property is for sale (or when sold if sooner) or within 3 years if the property is rented
- Interest at the national standard rate will be charged from the date of the loan agreement in the event of a breach of conditions

For further information and to request a Landlord Loan application pack, contact Housing Strategy on 01443 281136 or HousingStrategy@rctcbc.gov.uk.





Empty Property Grant

The Empty Property Grant enables prospective owner occupiers to purchase empty properties with the assistance of a grant to fund or contribute towards the cost of work required to bring the property back into use. The eligibility criteria includes:

- Applicants must be prospective owner occupiers who plan to live in the property as their main residence for a period of at least 5 years
- The property must have remained unoccupied for a period of 6 months prior to purchase and at the time of the grant application
- The property must meet the applicants housing needs
- Applicants are required to make a 15% maximum contribution to total cost of grant eligible work
- There will be discretion to waive the 15% contribution in exceptional circumstances such as financial hardship (for example the applicant is in receipt of an income related benefit)
- Maximum of £20,000 grant work limit
- Minimum of £1,000 grant work limit
- Ancillary fees can be added to the cost of works limit
- Registered with a legal charge on completion of the works for a 5 year period. Full repayment will be requested if the property is sold, or not occupied as intended during the 5 year grant condition period

For further information and to request an Empty Property Grant application pack, contact Housing Grants on 01443 281118 or HousingGrants@rctcbc.gov.uk

Interest Free Owner Occupier Loan

This scheme, supplied by Robert Owen Community Banking, is designed to help home owners have safer, warmer and greener homes. Loans are available between £1,000 and £25,000 (subject to affordability) with repayment terms of up to 10 years. The loans are interest free and there is currently no fees applicable.

The loans can be used for building works including windows, doors, damp-proofing, disabled access, kitchens, bathrooms, stairs, plumbing, electrics, plasterwork, floors, roofing, chimneys and brickwork. The scheme also supports boilers, wood burning stoves and energy efficiency measures such as insulation and some renewable energy installations.

The eligibility criteria includes:

- The property must be below the standard of safe, warm and secure
- You must own the property
- You must be able to afford to repay the loan over a maximum of 10 years
- A legal charge will be registered on the property to secure the loan
- Eligible works must exceed a minimum cost of £1,000

For further information and to request an application pack, contact Robert Owen Community Banking on 01686 626234 or visit www.rocbf.co.uk/rct-0-home-improvement-loans.





Repayable Financial Assistance (Lifetime Loan)

A lifetime loan is available to applicants who have been assessed and declined for an Owner Occupier Loan due to affordability. The purpose of the product is to provide financial support to applicants whose home is below the standard of safe, warm and secure. The loan is registered as an equity charge on the property and is only repayable upon sale or disposal of the property. The eligibility criteria includes:

- The property must be below the standard of safe, warm and secure
- You must have been assessed and declined for an Owner Occupier Loan due to affordability
- You must own the property
- A legal charge will be registered on the property to secure the loan
- The loan is repayable upon sale or disposal of the property
- Eligible works must exceed a minimum cost of £1,000

For further information and to request an application pack, contact Housing Grants on 01443 281118 or HousingGrants@rctcbc.gov.uk



Enterprise Investment Fund

The aim of the Enterprise Investment Fund is to support sustainable economic growth across Rhondda Cynon Taf. The grant programme provides financial assistance for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs), including start-ups as well as existing businesses, for both private and social enterprises.

Grant detail:

- Commercial premises – Minimum £1,500 up to a maximum of £10,000
- Home based premises – Minimum £500 up to a maximum of £1,500
- Intervention rate of a maximum of 50% of eligible project costs (excluding VAT)
- Expenditure incurred before grant approval is not eligible for funding

Who can apply:

- Are you a SME with fewer than 250 employees?
- Do you have either an annual turnover not exceeding approximately £40 million or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding approximately £34 million?
- Does your organisation operate within the County Borough area of Rhondda Cynon Taf?
- Do you pay either Council Tax or Non Domestic Rates to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council?
- Do you have or will you have Public Liability Insurance?

For further information and to request an expression of interest form, contact Prosperity and Development on 01443 281124 or Regeneration@rctcbc.gov.uk.

SELLING OPTIONS

Empty Property Investors

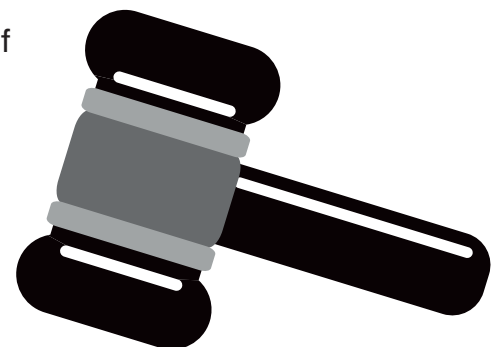
The Council holds a list of empty property investors who have made enquiries with regards to purchasing empty properties within the Authority. With your permission, we can pass on your contact details and details of your empty property for you to further discuss a potential sale. The Council will only assist in the exchange of contact details and it will become a private matter between buyer and seller after this point. It is recommended that you seek legal advice and obtain an independent valuation of your property when negotiating and agreeing the terms of sale.

To refer your property to an empty property investor, contact Public Health Housing on 01443 425565 / 425561 or PublicHealthHousing@rctcbc.gov.uk

Auction

Property auctions are increasing in popularity and can often be a quick and effective way of disposing of a property that is difficult to sell and often results in a good price being achieved for dilapidated or unusual properties. They are typically a quicker means of selling a property than via an estate agent as the property is generally listed for auction within 1 month and completion of the sale takes place within 20-30 days of the auction. Demand from multiple buyers can quickly drive up the price of the property, or you may even receive an offer for the property prior to the auction, which if you choose to accept, will avoid the need to go to auction.

For further information about the auction process and to find a local auctioneer, visit www.propertyauctionaction.co.uk



SELLING OPTIONS



SOLD

Estate Agents

Selling your property through an estate agent is likely to be quicker and easier than selling it yourself if you have no previous experience, however, it will cost more. Estate agents will value, market and sell your property, arrange viewings, negotiate a price, liaise with your solicitor and deal with the paperwork. You can expect to pay an estate agent between 0.75% and 3.0% of the selling price plus VAT, so it is advisable to shop around first for the best offer.

To find a local estate agent, visit
www.naea.co.uk/find-agent



4 RENTING OPTIONS

Landlord Advice

Renting your property can provide a means of additional income, improve the condition of the property and reduce the likelihood of vandalism and crime that empty properties often attract. If you are thinking of renting your property, the Council can offer you advice on becoming a landlord, including:

- Responsibilities and obligations
- Landlord and tenant law
- Tenancy agreements
- Tenant finding
- Tenancy support
- Local housing market and rental incomes
- Supply and demand
- Future opportunities
- Rent Smart Wales
- Landlord forums & newsletter




The Council's free tenant finder service can also enhance your ability to source prospective tenants. Tenants are matched according to their ability to meet the financial obligations in paying a set level of rent. Landlords are under no obligation to accept households nominated by the Housing Solutions service and are still able to advertise and let the property privately.



RENTING OPTIONS

Landlord Advice Continued...

The table below shows the approximate potential income that you could have earned over the period of time that your property has been empty.

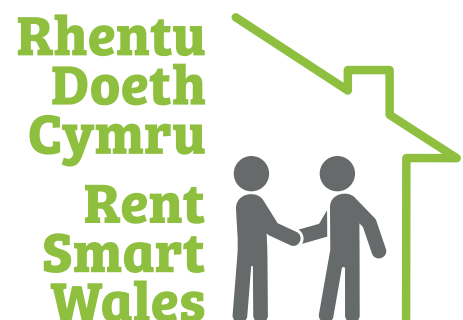
Potential income based on number of years empty (based on Local Housing Allowance 2019-2020)		
 1 year	 2 Bed	 3 Bed
1 year	£4,350	£4,681
2 year	£8,700	£9,362
3 year	£13,050	£14,043
4 year	£17,400	£18,724
5 year	£21,750	£23,405
6 year	£26,100	£28,086
7 year	£30,450	£32,767
8 year	£34,800	£37,448
9 year	£39,150	£42,129
10 year	£43,500	£46,810

For further Landlord Advice, contact Housing Strategy on 01443 281136 or HousingStrategy@rctcbc.gov.uk.

Rent Smart Wales

The Housing Act (Wales) 2014 introduced a requirement for landlords to be registered, and self-managing landlords who let and manage properties to undertake training and apply for a licence. This requirement is governed by Rent Smart Wales, which aims to drive up standards in the private rented sector to protect tenants and support good landlords and agents.

All private landlords are required to register themselves and their properties. If a landlord wants to manage property themselves, they must be licensed, demonstrate that they are 'fit and proper' to hold a licence and successfully complete approved training. Alternatively, a landlord can appoint a licensed agent to manage their property on their behalf.



For more information on the requirements of Rent Smart Wales, to register, apply for a licence or to book a training course, visit www.rentsmart.gov.wales or contact 03000 133 344.

Leasing Schemes

Empty Homes Wales, managed by United Welsh Housing Association offers a leasing scheme which includes the renovation works required to bring your empty property up to a habitable standard. They will lease the property from you and manage the tenancy including repairs and maintenance. The rental income received during the term of the lease will be used to offset the cost of the renovation works. Once the work costs have been repaid, they can continue to rent the property on your behalf if you wish, in return for a management fee which is deducted from the rental income.

If no renovation works are required and the property is already habitable, they also offer a tenancy management service.



For more information on these leasing schemes, contact Empty Homes Wales on 0800 294 0195 or visit empty.homes@unitedwelsh.com

Letting Agents

The advantages of letting your property through a letting agent include effective advertising of your property; knowledge of the local housing market; managing and conducting viewings; tenant finding; rent collection; routine maintenance; safety checks and inspections of the property; and dealing with the relevant paperwork. The extent of the services provided varies between agents and the price you will pay depends on the level of service you require, but will typically be between 10% and 20% of the rental income. For example, you may just want an agent to find you a tenant, or you may want them to manage the rental agreement from start to finish. It is advisable to choose a letting agent that is a member of a professional organisation, such as the Association of Residential Letting Agents.



To find a local letting agent, visit www.arla.co.uk/find-agent



Property Guardianship

A property guardian is someone who has entered into an agreement to live in a building or part of a building that would normally be otherwise empty, for the primary purpose of securing and safeguarding the property.

The cost of occupying a property under a guardian scheme may be cheaper than renting a similar sized property at market value and may offer an agreement with fewer long term commitments than a typical tenancy agreement. However, the properties that are used are frequently commercial or industrial buildings that were not originally intended to be used as residential accommodation and guardians may be required to leave at short notice.

Guardians usually enter an agreement or licence with the guardian company (not the building owner). This agreement gives the guardian the right to occupy all or part of a building, with the specific purpose to secure the building and comply with any obligations set out in their licence agreement. A guardian has no right to exclusive possession of the property.

Further information on property guardianship can be found at www.propertyguardianproviders.com

HOMESTEP PLUS

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and United Welsh housing association are working together to deliver the Homestep Plus scheme with funding from the Welsh Governments Vibrant and Viable Places programme.

The scheme enables United Welsh to identify and buy empty properties in the CF37 postcode and to refurbish them before offering them for sale at 70 per cent of the asking price. Alternatively, interested parties can identify their own property, which United Welsh will purchase on their behalf and sell onto them at the discounted price.

The scheme aims to help people get onto the property ladder at a time when it is difficult to do so and also to continue to boost the local housing market and associated economy.

To be able to apply for HomeStep Plus you must:

- Be interested in a property in the CF37 area
- Be a first time buyer
- Be over the age of 18
- Be a UK passport holder or have indefinite leaves to remain in the UK
- Be unable to afford to purchase the property at full market value
- Be able to raise a mortgage with a suitable mortgage lender
- Have access to enough savings to cover the costs of buying a home at 70% of market value, such as solicitors, mortgage and survey fees

For further information on the HomeStep Plus scheme, contact Housing Strategy on 01443 281136 or HomeStep@rctcbc.gov.uk or visit www.homefinderrct.org.uk/content/OtherHousingOptions/HomestepPlus

VAT DISCOUNTS

Renovations and alterations to residential properties that have been empty for at least 2 years (10 years if non-residential) are eligible for a reduced VAT rate of 5%. This applies to labour and materials associated with repairs, alterations, construction of associated garages and hard landscaping. Working with a VAT registered builder may significantly reduce the cost of bringing your empty property back into use.

A developer or house owner can claim back all VAT charged on the renovation of a building that has been empty for 10 years or more, once the dwelling is sold.

Reduced rates of VAT also apply to a number of types of building works, such as installing energy efficiency or energy saving measures, adapting a building for a disabled person or works to convert a non-residential building into a home. These discounts may apply to works to bring an empty property back into use.

Upon request, the Council can write an official letter to the property owner confirming how long the property has been empty. This letter may be requested by companies before applying the reduced VAT as it may be required by HM Revenue & Customs.

Further information on this reduced rate can be found in Section 8 of Public Notice 708 – VAT: Buildings and Construction, available from the National Advice Service on 0845 0109000 or from HM Revenue & Customs at www.gov.uk/business-tax/vat.

To request a letter confirming how long a property has been empty, contact Housing Strategy on 01443 281136 or HousingStrategy@rctcbc.gov.uk



ENERGY EFFICIENCY



Subject to funding levels and availability with installers, energy companies or their agents, you may be entitled to discounted and/or fully funded energy efficiency measures to help bring your empty property back into use and raise its energy performance and future fuel poverty proof households. Energy measures could include energy efficiency lighting, full heating systems, loft insulation, draught proofing, water efficient taps, and possibly renewables such as solar.

For further information on current energy efficiency funding and energy efficiency advice, contact the Heat & Save team on 01443 281136 or HeatAndSave@rctcbc.gov.uk



COUNCIL TAX



As of 1st April 2018, the Council has used its discretionary powers to remove the 50% Council Tax discount that was previously applied to long term empty properties. This means that since 1st April 2018, all properties which are both vacant and unfurnished for six months or more, and do not qualify for a Council Tax exemption, will be charged 100% Council Tax.



ENFORCEMENT ACTION

Invariably, empty homes can be neglected and fall into disrepair. Properties in this condition can be subject to a number of enforcement options that require owners to take action to secure, repair, renovate or demolish problematic buildings.

The main enforcement options available to the Council include:



- **Undertaking work to deal with an issue**

If your property or land is causing a nuisance or is having an adverse effect on the community, the Council has powers to undertake works if you fail to do so. The costs of doing this are recoverable from you e.g. securing buildings against unauthorised entry; removal of waste; improvements to external appearance; and demolition of buildings

- **Enforced sale**

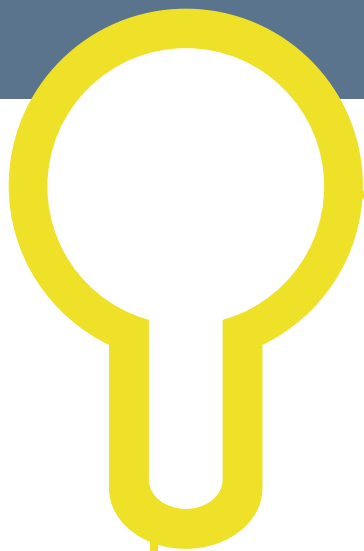
If the Council completes work in default of notices served on your property or land, under Section 103 of the Law of Property Act 1925, we have the power to sell your property or land in order to recover the costs incurred

- **Empty dwelling management orders (EDMOs)**

If you are unwilling to bring your property back into use, the Council can apply to take over the management of the property. An EDMO allows us to carry out work to bring the property up to a habitable standard and then rent and manage your property

- **Compulsory purchase orders (CPOs)**

If we are unable to encourage you to bring your property back into use or you fail to comply with statutory notices to improve your property, the Council may consider a CPO. If there is a strong enough case and it is in the public interest, a CPO will allow us to acquire your property or land.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

EMPTY PROPERTY

ADVICE PACK



RHONDDA CYNON TAF



Christmas Edition

RCT Landlords Forum Newsletter



Official Newsletter to the Landlord Forum



This Issue

Season's Greetings

Supporting People

Energy Efficiency

Planning

Homestep Plus

Public Notice

Diary Dates

Finding Your Tax Predicament Taxing



Sponsored by
PINNACLE[®]
Letting & Estate Agents

richard.read@pinnacle-group.com

01443 402400

The Landlord forum would like to thank and are proud to introduce our new sponsors, Pinnacle. Right is a photo of the team.





*from All of Rhondda Cynon Taf's
Housing Strategy Team.*

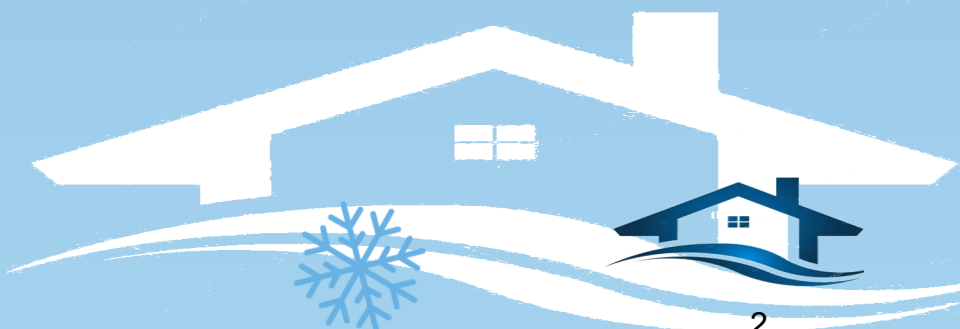
I would like to start this newsletter by saying a big **THANK YOU.**

Thank you for supporting the forum over the past 12 months, it really wouldn't have been as successful without you.

Thank you for the great attendance at the forums and the engagement throughout the year. It's been a great year and I hope that we as a forum will be able to develop further in order to make being a landlord in RCT easier.

We are close to 1000 members and are building a real sense of community. The aim for the new year will be to grow the membership base and develop new ways to engage with you, so watch this space !!!

Finally, I hope you enjoy the rest of the Newsletter and would also like to wish you and your family's a very Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year from Rob and all of the Housing Strategy Team.





ENERGY EFFICIENCY ADVICE

Hi! I am Penny!

I am the face of the Energy Team within Rhondda Cynon Taf Council. I am here today to explain how you, as a landlord can help us achieve a more energy efficient and prosperous RCT. By helping your tenants become more energy efficient, they can save money on their bills, therefore in turn be in a better position financially.

We provide services like RCT Switch, work with Nyth Nest to help make Wales cosy, Dwr Cymru Welsh Water and their community fund and Smart Energy GB for the role out of smart meters plus many more.

We also have grants for improving the energy ratings of homes with in RCT.

If you have any questions about how you can make your properties more efficient please contact us at heatandsave@rctcbc.gov.uk or can call one of the team on 01443 281136.

We also have our own news letter and once you or your tenant have introduced yourself to us, we can add to our mailing list so you can keep updated!

See you soon!!



RCT Switch

Helps you save money on your energy bills!

- Impartial advice provided by the Council's Energy Efficiency Service
- Provides advice and assistance on energy bills and debts
- No obligation, no fuss, no hassle service
- Other general energy advice also available
- Free of charge for RCT residents

We can help if you are having difficulty paying or would just like to see if there are cheaper deals available please contact us for further information.

Telephone: 01443 281136 or email: heatandsave@rctcbc.gov.uk to register your interest

Making Wales COSY



Nyth Nest

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water

Planning



HMO Supplementary Planning Guidance in RCT.



Houses of Multiple Occupation provide a vital option for the accommodation needs of both students and single person households.

In Rhondda Cynon Taf, HMOs are heavily clustered around the University of South Wales campus in Treforest. This high density of HMOs provoked growing concerns in regards to increasing detrimental social and economic pressures and a subsequent breakdown of community cohesion. These negative impacts resulted in an growing imbalance in the local housing market and in-turn increases in incidents of anti-social behaviour and associated crime.



In response to these concerns, the Council determined it necessary to prepare new Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to specifically control applications for new HMO's in RCT.



The HMO SPG, which was adopted in May 2018, sets out a number of key criteria that planning applications for conversions, or new build HMO's need to accord with. This is for both C4 and larger 'Sui Generis' HMO's (greater than 6 individuals).

Foremost, is the threshold set in the Treforest ward area for the numbers of HMO's allowed in a given area. No more than 20% of all residential properties in a 50 metre radius area of the application address should be an HMO. If the proposed HMO would result in this threshold percentage being exceeded, it would be considered unacceptable in principle, and permission then refused. It should be noted that there is very little, or no scope for new HMO properties or conversions in Treforest that would comply with this element of the SPG, given much of the village already has percentages of HMO greater than 30%.

Prior to the adoption of the SPG, the Council deemed it necessary to refuse applications for HMO's in Treforest throughout 2016 and 2017; however, they were later overturned and allowed through the Planning Appeals process. Since the adoption of the SPG, the Planning Inspectorate, (who determine Planning Appeals), have dismissed appeals determined to date for HMO's in Treforest. The SPG therefore gave considerable weight to these decisions.

We would finally like to emphasise that we continue to welcome investment by landlords in properties in RCT, to provide good quality, affordable rental opportunities. However, we would also like to take this opportunity to remind landlords that they need to ensure that they seek appropriate planning permission for conversions of properties to HMO's, and this in accordance with the SPG.

The SPG may be viewed on our website;

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/PlanningandBuildingControl/LocalDevelopmentPlans/SupplementaryPlanningGuidance.aspx>



Planning



As of the 16th March 2016 the Welsh Government requires all Local Planning Authorities to provide a statutory pre-application service.

As well as offering a statutory pre application advice service Rhondda Cynon Taff Council offers an enhanced pre application advice service

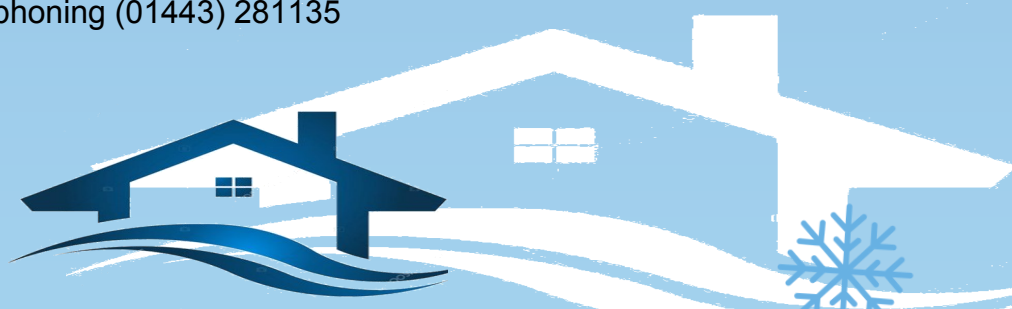
A range of charges will be payable for pre-application advice which will vary depending on the size and scale of the development. These fees are:

	Statutory Advice	Enhanced Advice
Householder	£25	£50
Single Dwelling	N/A	£100
Minor Development (1-9 dwellings or < 0.49 hectare)	£250	£300
Major Development (10-24 dwellings or 0.50 -0.99 hectare)	£600	£700
Large Major Development (Development exceeding 25 dwellings or on a site of 1 hectare or more)	£1000	£1,200

It is worth noting that with every **Enhanced Pre Application Advice** the fee includes a meeting with a case officer. After the first meeting then you can opt to pay for more meetings with the fees for this being laid out below:

	Additional Officer Meeting
Householder	£25
Single Dwelling	£40
Minor Development	£150
Major Development	£300
Large Major Development	£600

Request pre-application advice by completing a pre-application advice form from the councils website at www.rctcbc.gov.uk and emailing to it to planningservices@rctcbc.gov.uk or by sending to Regeneration & Planning, Sardis House, Sardis Road, Pontypridd, CF37 1DU. Cheques should be made payable to RCTCBC or the fee can be paid by phoning (01443) 281135





Are you a landlord of an empty property in the Treforest area?

HomestepPlus are looking for empty properties in the Treforest area.

If you are a Landlord with a property you would like to sell please contact the HomestepPlus Team on the contact details below.



Please contact Peter Lewis, Rhondda Cynon Taf on **01443 281136** for further details

E-mail – homestep@rctcbc.gov.uk

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WORKING TOGETHER TO BRING FIRST TIME BUYERS REFURBISHED PROPERTIES



2019 HMO ADDITIONAL LICENSING SCHEME- PUBLIC NOTICE.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) - Additional Licensing Public Notice

Notice is hereby given that on the 27th November 2018 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council has confirmed the designation of an additional licensing scheme in respect of Houses in Multiple Occupation covering all electoral wards in Rhondda Cynon Taf. This scheme will be known as Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Additional Licensing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Scheme 2019 ("The Scheme"). The confirmation of the designation is in accordance with Section 56 – 60 of The Housing Act 2004 and Regulation 9 of The Licensing and Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation and Other Houses (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Wales) Regulations 2006. The Scheme to which the designation applies has General Approval of the Welsh Assembly Government under the Housing Act 2004 (Additional HMO Licensing Wales) General Approval 2007 that came into force 13th March 2007. The Scheme applies to all Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) within the area described above, except those exempted by the relevant sections of the Act and those licensable under the Orders and Regulations made pursuant to Section 55 (2)(a) of the Housing Act 2004 (Mandatory Licensing). **The Scheme will be effective from 1st April 2019 and unless revoked beforehand or extended will cease to have effect on 31st March 2024.** The Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Additional Licensing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Scheme 2014 shall be revoked on the 31st March 2019. All licences issued under this scheme that remain in force at 31st March 2019 shall transfer to the new scheme and remain valid until they expire or are otherwise revoked by the Council or are surrendered. Any landlord, person managing or tenant in Rhondda Cynon Taf should seek advice from the Housing Standards Team of the Public Health and Protection Service of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council as to whether their property is affected by the designation of this Scheme. A person having control of or managing a licensable HMO in the designated area must apply to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council for a licence. **Failure to apply for a licence is an offence under Section 72(1) of The Housing Act 2004 for which a person may be fined up to £20,000. An application may also be made to the Residential Property Tribunal to make a Rent Repayment Order requiring the repayment of up to 12 months' rent collected during the time the property was unlicensed.** An application to license a HMO must be in a prescribed format, must contain certain particulars and must be accompanied by the requisite fee. **Information relating to the designation of the new scheme is available on the Council's website www.rctcbc.gov.uk or by contacting The Housing Standards Team, Public Health and Protection, Ty' Elai, Williamstown, CF40 1NY or telephone (01443) 425001 or e-mail publichealthhousing@rctcbc.gov.uk**



“My grandmother started walking five miles a day when she was 60. She’s 97 now and we don’t know where she is.” – Ellen DeGeneres



<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Registration From</u>	<u>Start</u>	<u>Finish</u>
Wednesday 23rd Jan 2019	17:45hrs	18:05hrs	20:00hrs
Wednesday 15th May 2019	17:45hrs	18:05hrs	20:00hrs



Venue: Pontypridd Rugby Club: Sardis Road, Pontypridd, CF37 1HA (X306797 Y189962)



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Letting & Estate Agents

Finding your tax predicament taxing?



What is the Section 24 tax relief change?

In 2015 the Government made an announcement: Landlords who were high-rate or additional-rate taxpayers would no longer be able to deduct mortgage interest from their rental income and could only secure relief on the interest at the basic tax rate rather than the higher level they had enjoyed up to this point.

Many landlords are now facing up to the reality of increased tax bills, with the reality that potential changes will create issues for basic-rate taxpayers too in the future.

When does this take effect from?

Although this was implemented on 6th April 2017, the loss of relief will not disappear automatically. Relevant tax returns can be submitted any time between then and 31st January 2019, so there is a few years until the force of the changes will be fully felt by the concerned.

How this might affect individual landlords can be seen below with the disallowed costs and their corresponding dates:

- 25% - 2017 to 2018
 - 50% - 2018 to 2019
 - 75% - 2019 to 2020
 - 100% - 2020 to 2021
-

Who will this effect?

Landlords who were high-rate or additional-rate taxpayers would no longer be able to deduct mortgage interest from their rental income and could only secure relief on the interest at the basic tax rate rather than the higher level they had enjoyed up to this point.

This applies to landlords who own personal property as well as those letting property in a partnership, but they have yet to be applied to furnished holiday lets or properties held in a company.

Are there any other effects?

Sadly, yes. These may be:

- Losing your personal tax allowance
 - Losing child benefits
 - It could also effect child support payments
-

Who will this not effect?

Landlords who own their properties outright will not see any difference to their tax bills. Additionally, landlords circumstances will only change if they are currently a higher or additional-rate taxpayer.

What can you do to be as tax efficient as possible?

By looking at the last year of property accounts, a tax expert will be able to confirm if a landlord will be affected and by how much. You would then be able to look at mitigation and strategic planning to minimize the effects of these tax changes whilst looking at succession planning to provide the right solution for each client.

What options may be available to me?

- Creating partnerships
 - Using spouse's tax allocation where they earn less than £45,000 per year
 - Creating trusts
 - Personal pension scheme
 - Add limited company formation
 - Reviewing your exit strategies
 - Capital gains planning
-

What are the benefits of the above?

- Companies are exempt from restrictions on finance cost relief
 - Incorporation can limit or remove capital gains
 - Partnerships can enable you to utilise nil-rate tax payers and basic-rate tax payers
 - Making your exit strategy as tax efficient as possible
-

What should you do?

- Speak to a professional about tax planning and your personal strategy - we can help you with this
- Consider all your options and implications, and act promptly in line with this
- Consider rent increases based on your own personal property/ properties to minimise the impact

APPENDIX E: Empty Homes Case Studies

Background

Empty homes represent a wasted resource, financial expense and in many cases a missed opportunity to provide much needed affordable housing for people in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Not only are they a waste of a valuable housing resource, but they can cause blight to communities and distress to residents affected by their unsightly appearance they may attract crime, vandals and anti-social behaviour. In addition to this, living next door to an empty home can devalue a home and deter investment in an area.

The property in question is a 3-bedroom property located in Ynysybwl which had been empty for almost two years. It was purchased by a young family who had 2 children, who without the assistance of an Empty Homes grant would have been unable to purchase an affordable property to meet their family needs. Their application was formally approved in September 2018.

Support

The Empty Homes grant provides assistance to tackle properties that may have been deemed undesirable and difficult to sell, that would remain unoccupied and fall further into disrepair. In addition, it also contributes towards the local economy market with local contractors undertaking the work and local suppliers providing the materials.

The family were awarded a maximum grant of £20,000, the total cost of work was just short of £45,000, making their contribution £24,000 towards the work. An RCT Grants Officer and Building Control Officer were involved during the execution of work on site, giving advice and guidance to ensure compliance with the Financial Regulations of the Grant Award and Building Regulations.

Impact

The work entailed a total house gut, including re-plastering, new partitions, concrete floors, full house re-wire, boiler replacement and new bathroom and kitchen facilities, providing a warm, safe and secure home for the owners to occupy. The Grant was completed in June 2019, taking 9 months in total

This is a good example of where Grant assistance has been used in-conjunction with private investment from the home owner and where the work carried out is to a high standard.

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APPENDIX F: Empty Homes Case Studies

Background
<p>The long-term empty property has been vacant since April 2017. It is a substantial 3 bed, family home, located just outside Talbot Green Town Centre and is one of the few long-term empty properties in the South of the Borough. The area has excellent communication links with the A4119 linking it in the south to the M4 Motorway, and to the north to the South Wales Valleys. It is also close to Pontyclun railway station and the town itself. The property is located in an area of high demand, for both rental properties and for sale. Empty homes in the ward are one of the lowest in RCT and average house prices are the second highest in the Borough. Although the property is in a prime location, it is in need of extensive refurbishment, which has made it difficult to sell on the open market.</p>
Support
<p>The property has been targeted by the Empty Homes Operational Group due to the fact it has been vacant for so long. Officers of the Council assisted the home owner with initiating the sale of the property to the buyer via our proactive approach to empty home reduction within the Borough. The new homeowner applied for a Houses into Homes loan in July 2019 and was successful in gaining a sum of £25,000.</p>
Impact
<p>The work to be completed on the property will result in a total renovation and will include; new UPVC windows and doors, new kitchen, new bathroom, new roof, damp proofing, central heating, tiling, plastering, rendering and a new drive and garden. The impact of the targeted approach developed by the Empty Homes Operational Group is that a long term empty property, which is located in a high demand area of the Borough has been brought back into use.</p>

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019-20

HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19th NOVEMBER 2019

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, PUBLIC HEALTH , PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Agenda Item No.

COMMUNITY HUBS PROGRESS REPORT

Author(s): Wendy Edwards, Service Director, Community Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Health and Well-being Scrutiny Committee with a progress report on the implementation of the Council's community hub plans.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Scrutinise the progress that has been made with the delivery of the action plan; and
- 2.2 Consider if there are any matters arising from the report that Members would wish to give further scrutiny.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide Members of the Health and Well-being Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to examine the progress made in respect of the implementation of community hubs and identify any other matters that Members may wish to further consider in the future.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council's approach to building resilient communities and early intervention and prevention includes the development of Neighbourhood Networks across the County Borough. The Neighbourhood Network is based on a set of characteristics and principles that will allow for a consistent application across the borough whilst offering flexibility to adapt to the needs of diverse communities. One of the key characteristics is that the Neighbourhood Network will comprise of a **Community Hub** and 'spoke/satellite' model.
- 4.2 Community Hubs provide a range of services provided by the public and voluntary sector in one or a number of closely located buildings in priority neighbourhoods. Bringing services together will provide a better public service offer and create economies of scale in terms of staffing and building costs. Making better, more cost effective use of our community assets and reinvesting resources in new or retrofitted, fit for purpose buildings will enable services to be sustainable in the longer term. The hub will as a minimum provide information and advice on site to the public and facilitate provision across the wider network of Community Spokes/Satellites within the Neighbourhood Network.
- 4.3 The Spokes/Satellites within the Neighbourhood Network will encompass the wide range of facilities, services, and groups run by public or third sector organisations all locally based in the designated catchment area. The hub and the associated spokes/satellites are intended to work as a network and by working in a more collaborative way enable the public to navigate all the relevant support available to them in their local area. The response will support a preventative approach that enables individuals, families and communities to access support as early as possible to prevent problems from escalating. These facilities will support a preventative approach that enables individuals and families to access support as early as possible to prevent problems from escalating.
- 4.4 This approach is expected to deliver the following outcomes:
- Better public services that are joined up, cost effective and accessible;
 - A community in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised;
 - A community that is well connected;
 - A community that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances;
 - A community that promotes and protects its culture and heritage.
- 4.5 This approach will, among other things, develop an infrastructure to support:
- A single point of contact within communities to access good quality information, advice and assistance;

- A platform to develop community capacity and volunteering;
- Opportunities for parents and families to improve their relationships and parenting skills;
- Opportunities for vulnerable people to seek support and be signposted to other services as appropriate;
- Opportunities for people to learn and develop skills in support of employment;
- Provide flexible community space for people to meet, share interest and socialise, thereby tackling loneliness and social isolation.

4.6 In determining where the Community Hubs should be located, consideration was given to the population size, natural boundaries and town centres, identifiable communities, alignment with school catchment areas, existing community support such as Communities First (now replaced by Communities for Work Plus) and Flying Start and availability of public transport. On this basis, ten geographical areas were identified and a community profile prepared of each area, including demographic, socio-economic, housing and educational attainment data.

4.7 The areas are:

- Rhondda Fach;
- South Cynon;
- North Rhondda;
- South Rhondda;
- Mid Rhondda;
- North Cynon;
- North West Taff Ely;
- North East Taff Ely;
- South East Taff Ely;
- South West Taff Ely.

A map of the Neighbourhood Network areas can be seen at **Appendix 1**

5. CURRENT COMMUNITY HUBS

5.1 Two community hubs have recently been opened – Yr Hwb (Ferndale) which forms part of a Public Service Board Community hub pilot with the Gurnos in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council; and Canolfan Pennar (Mountain Ash) serving the Rhondda Fach and South Cynon areas respectively. It is expected that each Community hub will develop and provide services differently, depending on the needs within each Neighbourhood Network area. Although it is early days, these two facilities appear to be having a positive impact within their neighbourhoods and providing improved access to a range of services.

5.2 The **Hwb at Ferndale** is led by an anchor organisation, Fern Partnership. It will deliver the Council's commitments to the Welsh Government Children First Initiative under the Cwm Taf Wellbeing Objective 1, Thriving Communities with a focus on the Rhondda Fach 'Community Zone' and the PSB approach to developing "an integrated place based approach to building communities that prevents and mitigates the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences and breaks the intergenerational cycle of adversity".

- 5.3 Fern Partnership is responsible for the delivery of the childcare provision within the Hwb, and for the development of the wider Neighbourhood Network that will ensure the community of the Rhondda Fach is fully involved in the development of services at a local level. Ferndale library has been relocated to the hub building and the Council's employment programmes and learning provision can also be accessed there alongside a rapidly developing range of activities, advice and support for all ages, including Mental Health and Wellbeing services and support to build resilient families.
- 5.4 This is an innovative approach where the Council is co-locating its services in partnership with a third sector anchor organisation. It is anticipated that this will be a more cost effective and sustainable model. Fern Partnership have sought external funding to support the development of the Hub alongside a funding contribution from the Council.

Key achievements to date include:

- **Little Ferns** – registered 79 children since opening. Feedback from parents continues to be positive with particular reference to developing children's independence skills. Natural Resources Wales funding allowed the children to purchase gardening resources to find out about flowers and vegetables.
- **Library Services** – reported positive developments being based in a shared Hwb space. There has been a 41% increase in visitor numbers compared to the same period in 2019. They have 10 registered new Bookstart borrowers that focuses on enjoying books with your child due to parents/grandparents calling into the library when collecting their child. There has been an increase in adult and children memberships. The ICT Suite and meeting room are proving positive assets for the local communities. Staff have commented on how partnership work between the teams have enabled staff to signpost community members to services/support and information.
- **Community Coordinator** – appointed to support Neighbourhood Network.
- **Sensory Room** - now complete and open for community/organisation booking.
- **Primary CAMHS** - from 9th September, CAMHS have started offering support for anxiety, low mood, self-harm (no suicide ideation) via GP referrals and will have an ongoing presence in the Hwb.
- **Adult Learning** – classes confirmed to start in September (Play work, Food Hygiene, Essential Skills, Welsh, MECC, and Digital Literacy).
- **Dragons Savers Credit Union** – volunteers have shown an interest in supporting the Credit Union.
- **Family Information Service** - to host drop-in information sessions.
- **Lullaby Project** – music and song writing project for expectant mothers and parents of pre-school children.

- **Community Gardening Project** – on going project with 8 active members who meet on a weekly basis.
- **Volunteers** – 16 volunteers recruited to support the function of the Hwb – Little Ferns, Storytelling, Garden Project, Credit Union and Marketing.
- There has been a positive impact on **the wider neighbourhood network** through the facilitation by the Community Coordinator of activities outside of the Hwb. For example, the Schools Butterfly Project supported from NRW funding with two local schools - Llyn y Forwyn and Darran Park; drop-in sessions at the Dementia Café at Seion Chapel, and referrals made to courses and support available at other local facilities.

5.5 **Canolfan Pennar** at Mountain Ash involves the co-location of Council services – the library service, One4All and employment programmes; alongside a privately run café at the former Council Day Centre.

Key achievements in the first few months include:

- **Visitors to the hub** – 49,755 visits were recorded to the hub between June and September;
- **Library services** - visits to the library have almost doubled from 14,573 (June – Sept 2018) to 26,562 (June – Sept 2019).
- **Adult Learning** and **Employment support programmes** are working closely together and developing a much wider range of programmes for the community with partners such as the Hapi project and Adult Learning Wales. These include low level confidence-building courses to accredited courses. Provision is also available for people who have moderate or severe learning disabilities.
- **Digital Fridays** – attendance at Digital Fridays sessions has more than doubled since they were moved to the hub as customers find it is much more accessible.
- **Community engagement activities** have increased as community groups use rooms for a wide variety of purposes including Craft activities and local history talks.
- **Information sessions** are provided every month on a variety of issues such as eating disorders, raising self-esteem with referrals onto other provision including Work Clubs.
- **Job creation** - the expanded space available for the café tenant compared with her previous facility and the popularity of this location has enabled her to employ more staff. In addition, the offer of a hot meal at mid-day which formed part of the lease has addressed the concerns of previous Day centre users who feared the loss of what they considered to be a valuable service for older residents.

- Opportunities to link with the proposed Primary Care Hub to be developed in Mountain Ash by the Cwm Taf UHB, are being actively investigated.
- Canolfan Pennar has proven to be the most attractive of venues for people to gain the Information, advice and assistance they require and coupled with the growth of the café, which has grown to employ eight staff – previously two – footfall is extraordinary when compared to the same time period during the previous year.

5.6 However, it is important to note that this hub is more than merely a co-location of services and a café. Success is predicated on a different service delivery approach that has seen significant time invested in staff training, and engagement with a wide range of providers external to the Council so that customers can access the support and learning opportunities they identify they need on-site.

5.7 One aspect that has been identified as being crucial to ensuring the success of the wider neighbourhood network and community engagement across neighbourhood network areas is the role of a Community Coordinator. This has been evidenced at Yr Hwb where the Coordinator has been able to reach out to community, and health organisations across the Rhondda Fach facilitating developments across the wider area not just within the hub. Accordingly funding has been allocated for a similar (temporary) post to be made available in the South Cynon neighbourhood network area and it is the intention to work with partners to ensure that a similar role will be funded across other neighbourhood networks as the hubs are rolled out.

5.8 As further hubs are opened it is envisaged that they will support the targeting of provision at areas of highest need and contribute to the Council's early intervention and prevention agenda including improving people's health and well-being and enabling them to develop new skills so that they can gain, and stay, in work.

6. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

6.1 In order to support the development of community hubs and neighbourhood networks, changes have been made to staffing structures within the Council. The team responsible for Community Asset Transfers transferred over from Corporate Estates to Community Services in January 2019. This change has embedded the link between the transfer of Council assets to interested parties and Council community hub priorities and the development of neighbourhood networks. New staff were appointed to support these developments and a full team has been in place since September 2019. The team works very closely with third sector partners to ensure that community groups have all the support they need to develop sustainable plans for their community facilities. (The staffing and reporting structure can be seen at Appendix 2.)

6.2 A Community Insights and Social Value software tool has been purchased which is capable of providing an in-depth analysis of datasets to profile individual areas. This is currently being piloted with some community organisations with the view that it could be made available to all interested community groups to support their applications for funding in future by providing detailed profiling of their communities as well as calculating the social value from potential projects.

6.3 Alongside these developments significant research has been undertaken to explore options for maximising community benefits through procurement contracts. A report is currently being developed for Cabinet consideration.

7. NEXT STEPS

7.1 Plans are at an advanced stage for the establishment of community hubs at Porth Plaza and Llys Cadwyn (Pontypridd). Both of these developments will be Council-run facilities while a third sector led development is being planned with Age Connect Morgannwg at Aberdare.

Porth Plaza

7.2 This is an existing community asset that is currently under-utilised by the public. It currently delivers One4All services, houses Porth library and is a base for staff who work on employment programmes. A privately-run crèche is also on-site. The Council has been successful in gaining funding from the 21st Century Schools Community Learning Grant and an ICF grant to redesign the interior of the building so that it is able to offer access to a wider range of public and third sector services and meet the needs of community groups including residents whose activities have been displaced since the closure of the local Day Centre. A Changing Place for people with disabilities will ensure that the building is accessible to all people while the library will be moved to the ground-floor and will benefit from improved digital facilities for customers.

7.3 An extensive mapping exercise has been undertaken to identify community buildings, services and forums in the wider area and some unmet needs and gaps in provision were identified in the community.

In summary the main gaps identified for South Cynon, Porth were:

- Open access play schemes;
- Youth provision in Porth Town Centre;
- Activity based services, respite and befriending services for the elderly and frail;
- Accessible and inclusive opportunities for individuals with Learning Disabilities

7.4 In line with key objectives of NN development, service provision has been agreed to meet the identified local need and proposes to create/further develop the following facilities within Porth Plaza Hub:

- A single point of access for community members to gain Information, Advice and Guidance;
- An enhanced library facility, including a comfortable seating area, children's area and computer access;
- To continue to facilitate a privately run childcare provision;
- Additional community space for meetings and events;
- Additional space for targeted service delivery including activities for 50+;
- Fit for purpose space for youth provision;
- Employment Pathway Support and access to adult community learning provision;
- Accessible Disabled toilets and changing facilities for adults.

In addition, consultation has taken place under the Porth Town Centre Strategy, with the views of community members being taken into account.

- 7.5 Council officers will work with third sector partners who will be able to deliver their services from the hub if they wish to do so including provision of advice, training and activities. This hub development received the support of Citizens Advice and the Department of Work and Pensions.
- 7.6 Work is due to commence on the internal re-fit in January and it is planned to be complete by the end of March.
- 7.7 Funding for Community Coordinator has been identified and this will be a valuable addition to the team at the hub enabling the development of an active neighbourhood network.

Llys Cadwyn

- 7.8 The Council's flagship development at Taff Vale will include the development of Llys Cadwyn hub. This will consist of a new library built across 2 floors with a café and the Council's One4All service based on the ground floor alongside the usual range of library services, community rooms and one to one consultation rooms that can be used by partners. There will also be an exhibition area that will accommodate displays of work by local artists and community groups.
- 7.9 There will be a dedicated craft area for children and the building will benefit from the latest in digital technology including interactive tables and virtual headsets that will allow access to the latest learning opportunities.
- 7.10 An enhanced and expanded Reference and Local Studies service will be available on the first floor with a dedicated IT/Education room, a multi-function leisure suite and spin-room. The second floor will be dedicated to a gym. Access will be available to the largest community room, café and leisure facilities outside of core library hours. An exhibition area will be available

Cynon Linc (Aberdare)

- 7.11 **Cynon Linc (North Cynon)** is based at Aberdare (in the former St.Mair's Day Centre). The building was transferred to Age Connect Morgannwg in 2018 as part of an asset transfer after the closure of the Day Centre. This model reflects the approach taken in Yr Hwb in so far as it will be a third sector-led development with favourable terms and conditions that should enable the third sector organisation to lead developments for a secure position. The building is currently closed for renovation, with a few discrete services remaining, such as Information, Advice and Assistance and Nail Cutting sessions, rooms remain available for hire.
- 7.12 ACM's proposal to transform the existing day centre for over 50 years olds into an intergenerational community hub with co-located G.P surgery and childcare was innovative and made better use of a Council facility and mirrored the Councils developing Community Hub/Zone and Neighbourhood Network Model. In order to carry out the

capital development works on the building, which on completion, (during 2020/21), aims to deliver:

- A community hub accessible to people of all ages, from anywhere not just within RCT;
- Age Connect Morgannwg operational base;
- Day Nursery provision for babies and children up to the age of 5, delivered by The Fern Partnership (Community Interest Company);
- Primary Care services via the Maendy Practice;
- A 'meet and greet' reception service to ensure visitors and callers to the centre feel welcome and are able to access the service they need;
- A Community Information and Advice Hub that will include surgery days with local third sector organisations and community groups;
- An Education Room suitable for use by the whole community which will include art classes, IT classes, adult learning, group activities and large meeting space;
- A Sensory and Therapies Room for use by people with cognitive impairment
- A Dementia Cafe and activities that will offer support to carers;
- Affordable meals that cater for all dietary requirements, throughout the day and evening including food to go via snack outlets;
- Modern, well equipped space for community organisations to run activities and rooms for hire for meetings, parties and events;
- Nail Cutting Clinic.

Treorchy cultural hub

7.13 In line with the Council approach of developing hubs that are appropriate to specific areas, the intention is to establish a cultural hub at Treorchy taking advantage of the fact that it has two significant cultural assets in close proximity - the Park and Dare Theatre and the Treorchy Area Library that holds the local studies collection for the Rhondda Valley. Plans for this are at an early stage of development and will not be effected until the next financial year. In the meantime the theatre is engaging in the Arts Council of Wales programme Designing Public Value with Purpose which includes developing its relationship with community groups, and businesses in the area so that it can widen participation in the arts and enhance its community engagement. A mapping exercise of the area has been undertaken and staff are working closely with colleagues in Regeneration to ensure that any developments enhance proposals to support town centre regeneration.

8. CHALLENGES

- 8.1 Identifying community partners who are able to become third sector anchors is not always easy while developing these relationships to a point where an asset can be transferred and a hub established can take a considerable amount of time.
- 8.2 Sustainability is an issue for third sector partners who are dependent on external grant funding and the ability to generate revenue through income. It is unlikely that the hubs will be totally independent of the need for some Council support in the form of funding.

- 8.3 Although there are tangible achievements that can be identified already in respect of the two hubs that are currently open, it will be important to evidence the impact of community hubs and neighbourhood networks on the early intervention and prevention agenda and other expected outcomes if they are to be sustained over the longer term. Data Cymru have been supporting the PSB to develop an evaluation framework but this is yet to be finalised. In the meantime, colleagues who are currently undergoing the Mercury management training have also been asked to research methods for evaluating the impact of community hubs from good practice identified elsewhere.
- 8.4 Collaboration and co-production takes considerable thought, effort, understanding and the building of trust with partners which takes time. It is cannot be accomplished quickly if it is to be meaningful.

9. EQUALITY OR DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no equality or diversity implications arising from this report.

10. CONSULTATION

- 10.1 In relation to the development of **Yr Hwb** in Ferndale, some consultation had been undertaken by Cwm Taf PSB in the form of a facilitated workshop attended by 60 residents of the Rhondda Fach. The feedback from the event identified that the greatest strength was undoubtedly the community spirit and how people supported each other. Many residents highlighted the perceived loss of local services and amenities as a key thing they would change. Subsequently, a four week focussed consultation was undertaken from the 19th February to 19th March 2018 focussed on the proposal of developing a hub at the former Ferndale Infant school by co-locating the library with Fern Partnership's proposed childcare provision. The consultation used a range of methods including a questionnaire, four drop-in engagement events, an email to all 1344 library users and promotion through the Older Persons Advisory Group. The proposal received overwhelming support from the respondents.
- 10.2 Community Matters events have been held focussing on getting the community connected and to start identifying the skills and experience of local residents; while a series of informal events have been on-going advertised via posters at local shops, social media and the Our Cwm Taf website.
- 10.3 Cwm Taf Public Service Board have an Information, Communication and Involvement Group, chaired by Interlink, to ensure community groups and individuals voices continue to be heard.
- 10.4 There are regular Neighbourhood Network Steering Group meetings held, led by the Fern partnership as the anchor organisation. The key theme at present is communication – how best to share activity in the Rhondda Fach and the plans for local events going forward.
- 10.5 Consultation on the closure of **Mountain Ash Day** Centre and relocation of the library took place between 26th February and 26th March 2018. Further consultation was undertaken with residents on the proposed design of the building and the type of provision they would like to see there. Previously library customers had identified

improvements they would like to see in library provision through the Library Customer Survey 2016 and Keep in Touch Days.

- 10.6 Consultation on developments in **Porth** was undertaken as part of a six week Porth Town Centre Strategy Consultation that took place between 29th October and 10th December 2018. The approach taken included a questionnaire and face to face engagement. The Town Centre Strategy identified the site occupied by the Alec Jones Day Centre as having the potential to accommodate a new Transport Hub. In developing Porth Plaza into a Community Hub, it was proposed to relocate the services currently provided by Alec Jones Day Centre to the new Community Hub. Respondents were asked what they would do if the Day Centre activities were to transfer to Porth Plaza. 92% of service users responded to this question stating that they would attend the new Community Hub and nobody stated that they would stop attending the activities. Therefore, the Porth Plaza Hub will have a crucial role in preventing social isolation for the current day centre users.
- 10.7 **Llys Cadwyn** - In January 2016 views on the preferred future uses of the Taff Vale site were sought from local residents and businesses via a questionnaire that was distributed throughout the town and online. 1,551 respondents completed the questionnaire and the main preferred uses for the site were retail and restaurants with a selection of other uses in the middle range including public services, hotel, bars and gym.
- 10.8 In addition to the public consultation outlined above, library customers have indicated through the customer survey implemented in April 2016 and suggestions that have been submitted to the Area Librarian, that access to refreshments on-site would be welcomed while feedback throughout the year relating to IT provision has indicated that improvements made to PC hardware would be welcomed. As the project has developed there has been on-going consultation with residents, local schools and businesses and Elected Members.
- 10.9 **Cynon Linc** - Age Connects Morganwg undertook consultations in relation to the development following Cabinet approval, to transfer the asset on a 99 year lease, in September 2017.
<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/Cabinet/2017/09/19/Reports/AgendaItem6Proposaltoapproveinprinciplea99yearleaseholdtransferofStMairsDayCentreAberdaretoAgeConnectsMorgannwg.pdf>

11. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The development of Yr Hwb in Ferndale required the major redevelopment of a former infant school owned by the Council. The building has been leased to Fern Partnership as the third sector anchor organisation and this has enabled them to access significant external funding that otherwise would not have been available to the Council. In addition to the building, the Council has made a capital contribution of approximately £300k. This was used as a match funding contribution and has enabled additional funding from a number of sources:
- Pen Y Cymoedd Windfarm (both capital and revenue);
 - Welsh Government Communities Facilities Programme;
 - WCVS;
 - Integrated Care Fund (ICF);

- MALD (for the library only).

11.2 In total, the capital scheme cost nearly £800k.

11.3 **Canolfan Pennar** attracted investment of £650k from the Council.

11.4 **Porth Plaza** will be a mixture of Council capital funding and grant funding from 21st Century Schools Community Learning Centres Fund and ICF.

11.5 **Llys Cadwyn** will be a £6.2 million development comprising of £300,000 MALD funding and £5.9 million Prudential borrowing.

11.6 The funding package for **Cynon Linc** is in the process of being developed with applications for funding waiting for confirmation.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

13. LINKS TO WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES

13.1 This proposal is consistent with the sustainable approach promoted by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act through the five ways of working:

- Long-term – each community zone will seek to achieve long term sustainable change in their community;
- Prevention – this approach is a key element of the PSB and both Councils' increased emphasis on early intervention and prevention;
- Integration – this proposal contributes to a range of strategic priorities in an integrated and coherent approach;
- Collaboration – intrinsic to this approach is collaboration with other public services and the third sector;
- Involvement – communities will be involved through a different approach to engagement and co-production;

13.2 This proposal makes a direct contribution to the seven national well-being goals, in particular a Prosperous Wales, a Resilient Wales, a Healthier Wales and a Wales of Cohesive Communities.

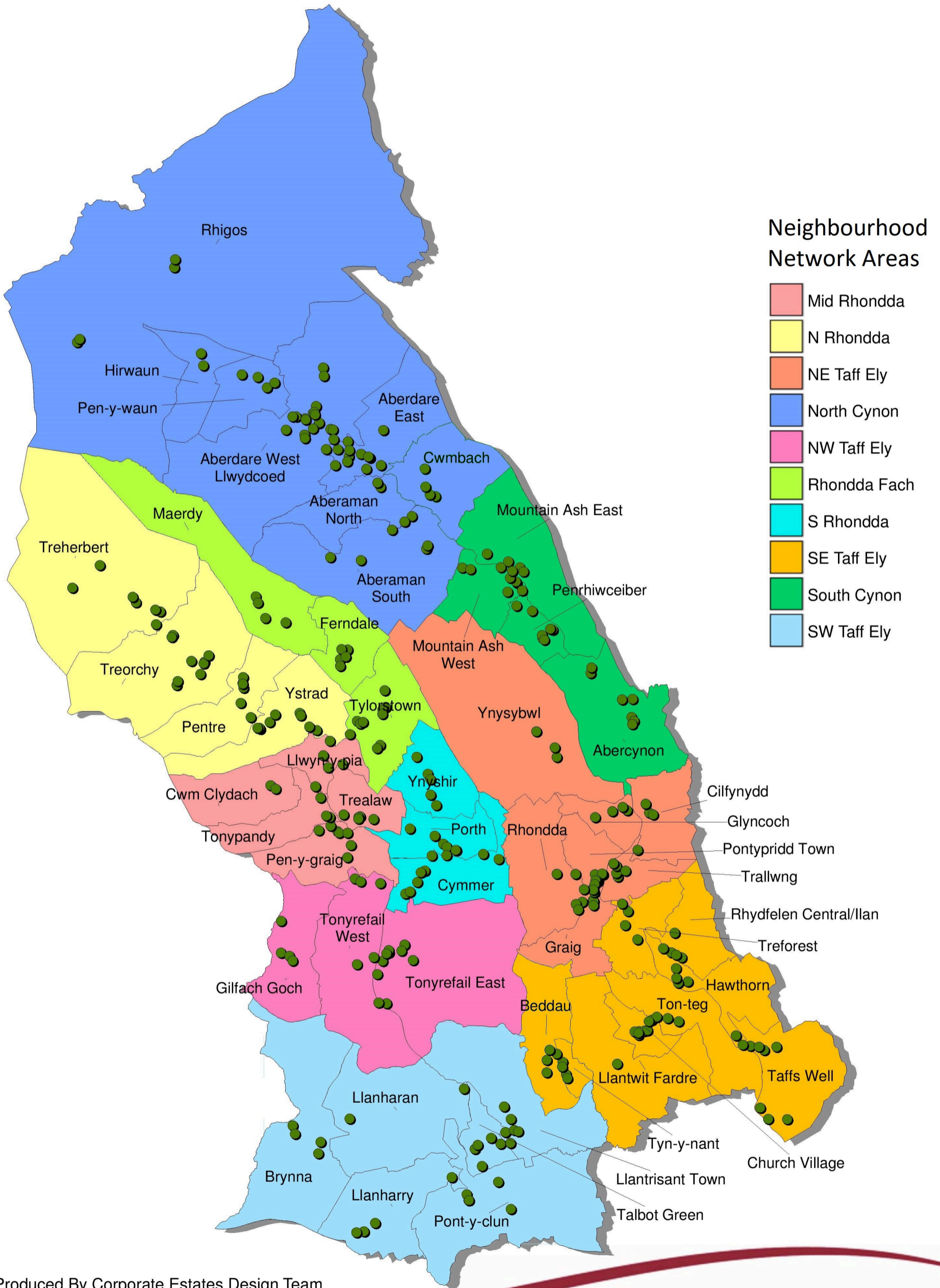
14. CONCLUSION

14.1 Significant developments have taken place in respect of developing community hubs in Rhondda Cynon Taf over the past year. There remains considerable work to be done in collaboration with partners to develop new community hubs and embed the wider neighbourhood network approach to providing services that communities want and that are co-produced with them.

14.2 It is currently too early to measure the impact of these changes on the early intervention and prevention agenda and the development of an appropriate framework is being prioritised.

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Draft Community Hubs

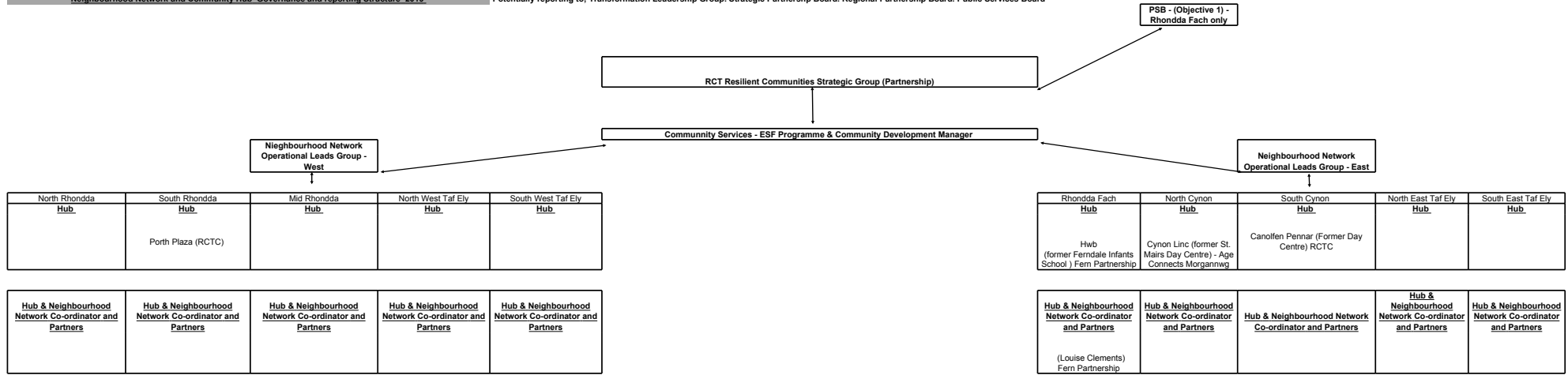


Map Produced By Corporate Estates Design Team
 based on information supplied March 2017

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Neighbourhood Networks

*Enable communities to have a say about the services they need, the priorities, and how they are organised and delivered.

*Communities will be better connected to services with more information, advice and assistance about what's available locally and how to access the support. Local partners will be asked to promote and share details of the activities, projects and support they provide eg. Neighbourhood Network Events and directory of information, social media pages etc.

* Local partnerships will be supported to access additional funding. Partners such as the Council will look to these Neighbourhood Networks to inform what projects are funded (through their own grants) to ensure proposals are needed and provide added value (rather than duplicate and put at risk existing activities).

* Can inform gaps in local service delivery or where services need to be more accessible - this can help inform the priorities for RCT Together in maximising use of Council buildings

* Can help identify local people with skills and experiences. Support to sustain community groups with Neighbourhood Network Champions/Ambassadors who may want to share their skills and knowledge with groups across the Network

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