CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

GWŶS I GYFARFOD O'R CYNGOR

C.Hanagan
Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaeth y Gwasanaethau Democrataidd a Chyfathrebu
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Rhondda Cynon Taf
Y Pafiliynau
Parc Hen Lofa'r Cambrian
Cwm Clydach CF40 2XX

Dolen gyswllt: Sarah Handy- Swyddog Graddedig, Ymchwil a Materion Craffu (01443 424099)

DYMA WŶS I CHI i gyfarfod o **PWYLLGOR CRAFFU - CYLLID A CHYFLAWNIAD** yn cael ei gynnal yn **Siambr y Cyngor, Y Pafiliynau, Parc Hen Lofa'r Cambrian, Cwm Clydach, Tonypandy CF40 2XX** ar **DYDD MERCHER, 29AIN IONAWR, 2020** am **5.00 PM.**

Caiff Aelodau nad ydyn nhw'n aelodau o'r pwyllgor ac aelodau o'r cyhoedd gyfrannu yn y cyfarfod ar faterion y cyfarfod er bydd y cais yn ôl doethineb y Cadeirydd. Gofynnwn i chi roi gwybod i Wasanaethau Democrataidd erbyn Dydd Llun, 27 Ionawr 2020 trwy ddefnyddio'r manylion cyswllt uchod, gan gynnwys rhoi gwybod a fyddwch chi'n siarad Cymraeg neu Saesneg.

AGENDA

Tudalennau

1. **DATGAN BUDDIANT**

    Derbyn datganiadau o fuddiannau personol gan Aelodau, yn unol â gofynion y Cod Ymddygiad.

    Noder:

    1. Mae gofyn i Aelodau ddatgan rhif a phwnc yr agendwm mae eu buddiant yn ymwneud ag ef a mynegi natur y buddiant personol hwnnw; a
    2. Lle bo Aelodau'n ymneilltuo o'r cyfarfod o ganlyniad i ddatgelu buddiant sy'n rhagfarnu, mae rhaid iddyn nhw roi gwybod i'r Cadeirydd pan fyddan nhw'n gadael.

2. **COFNODION**

Derbyn cofnodion o gyfarfod blaenorol y Pwyllgor Craffu – Cyllid a Chyflawniad a gafodd ei gynnal ar 16 Rhagfyr 2019.

ADRODDIAD Y CYFARWYDDWR GWASANAETH – GWASANAETHAU DEMOCRATAIDD A CHYFATHREBU

3. ADBORTH – GWAITH CYN Y CAM CRAFFU

Trafod gwybodaeth am faterion y mae'r Pwyllgor yma'n craffu arnynt – Strategaeth Gyflogaeth Ddrafft a Chynllun Gweithredu Rhondda Cynon Taf 2019/21.

4. DOLENNI YMGYNGHORI

Gwybodaeth mewn perthynas ag ymgynghoriadau perthnasol i'w hystyried gan y Pwyllgor.

ADRODDIADAU'R SWYDDOGION

5. SESIWN YMGYSYLLTU – Y PWYLLGOR CRAFFU A'R CABINET

Derbyn Cynghorydd y Fwrdeistref Sirol M. Norris (Aelod o'r Cabinet ar faterion Gwasanaethau Corfforaethol), sy'n rhoi trosolwg i Aelodau'r Pwyllgorau Craffu o'r gwaith a gaiff ei gyflawni'n rhan o bortffolio'r Aelod o'r Cabinet. Mae adroddiad ynghlwm i gyd-fynd â'r eitem yma.

6. ADRODDIAD CANOL BLWYDDYN CYLCH RHEOLI'R TRYSORLYS 2019/20

Trafod adroddiad Cyfarwyddwr y Gwasanaethau Cyllid a Digidol.

7. STRATEGAETH CYLLIDEB REFENIW DDRAFFT Y CYNGOR AR GYFER 2020/21

Derbyn cyflwyniad gan y Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaeth – Gwasanaethau Cyllid a Gwella ac ymgymryd â gwaith cyn y cam craffu ar gynigion mewn perthynas â Strategaeth Cyllideb Refeniw ddrafft y Cyngor ar gyfer 2020/21.
(Nodwch: Mae'r cyflwyniad i ddilyn ac mae copi o Adroddiad Adborth Cam 1 yr Ymgynghoriad wedi'i atodi.)

8. ADOLYGIAD Y CADEIRYDD A DOD Â'R CYFARFOD I BEN

Adlewyrchu ar y cyfarfod a'r camau gweithredu i'w dwyn ymlaen.

9.   MATERION BRYS

Trafod unrhyw faterion sydd, yn ôl doethineb y Cadeirydd, yn faterion brys yng ngoleuni amgylchiadau arbennig.

Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaeth y Gwasanaethau Democrataidd a Chyfathrebu

Cylchreliad:-

Y Cynghorwyr Bwrdeistref Sirol Y Cynghorydd M Powell a Y Cynghorydd G Thomas – Cadeirydd ac Is-gadeirydd, yn y drefn honno

Y Cynghorwyr Bwrdeistref Sirol:

Y Cynghorydd G Holmes, Y Cynghorydd S Bradwick, Y Cynghorydd R Yeo,
Y Cynghorydd W Lewis, Y Cynghorydd S. Rees-Owen, Y Cynghorydd J Williams,
Y Cynghorydd T Williams, Y Cynghorydd J Cullwick, Y Cynghorydd G Caple,
Y Cynghorydd A Davies-Jones, Y Cynghorydd A Fox, Y Cynghorydd M Diamond
and Y Cynghorydd M Adams

Y Cynghorydd Bwrdeistref Sirol S Belzak – Aelod ex officio

Y Cygnhorwyr Bwrdeistref Sirol L.M.Adams a S Evans – Cadeirydd ac Is-gadeirydd y Pwllgor Trosolwg a Chraffu yn y drefn honno

Aelodau Cyfetholedig Addysg er gwybodaeth-

Mr A Ricketts, Cynrychiolydd Awdurdodau Esgobaethol â'r hawl i bleidlais
Ms A Jones, Cynrychiolydd UNITE
Mr J Fish, Cynrychiolydd Rhiant-Lywodraethwr wedi'i ethol
Mr M Cleverley, Cynrychiolydd Cymdeithas Genedlaethol yr Ysgolfeistri ac Undeb yr Athrawesau a'r Panel Athrawon
Mr C Jones, Cynrychiolydd GMB
Mr D Price, Cynrychiolydd UNSAIN/UNISON
Mrs C Jones, Cynrychiolydd Undeb Cenedlaethol yr Athrawon a'r Panel Athrawon
Mr Kevin Wilhite, Cynrychiolydd Rhiant-Lywodraethwr wedi'i ethol
Ms R Nicholls, Cynrychiolydd Rhiant-Lywodraethwr wedi'i ethol
Mr R Hull – Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor Archwilio

Tudalen wag

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 16 December 2019 at 5.00 pm at the Council Chambers, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park. Clydach Vale, Tonypandy, CF40 2XX.

County Borough Councillors - Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor G Thomas   Councillor S Bradwick
Councillor R Yeo   Councillor J Williams
Councillor J Cullwick   Councillor G Caple

Officers in attendance:-

Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mr T Jones, Service Director – ICT & Digital Services

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor M Adams, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Councillor R Bevan, Cabinet Member for Enterprise Development & Housing

Others:-

Mr J. Fish, Voting Elected Parent/ Governor Representative

30   Welcome

The Vice Chair welcomed Members to the meeting of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee and thanked everyone for attending.

31   Declaration of Interest

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

32   Apologies

Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillors M. Powell, M. Diamond, A. Davies-Jones, G. Holmes, W. Lewis, S. Rees-Owen, A. Fox and T. Williams.

33   Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 4th of November 2019 as an accurate reflection of the meeting, subject to the following amendments:-

- Item 24, page 7 to be amended as follows; "Councillor Thomas commented that the greater proportion of areas in the Cynon Valley are

not being charged CIL".

34   Consultation Links

The Vice Chair referenced the consultation links, which were available through the 'RCT Scrutiny' website. The Vice Chair reminded Members that Information is provided in respect of relevant consultations for consideration by the Committee, which are circulated on a monthly basis by the Graduate Scrutiny Research Officer.

35   Cabinet & Scrutiny Engagement

The Director of Prosperity and Development, in conjunction with Councillor R. Bevan (Cabinet Member for Enterprise Development & Housing), provided an overview of the portfolio responsibilities of the Cabinet Member to include Town Centres, Planning and Housing.

The Cabinet Member reminded Members that the focus has been to develop and promote the County Borough in order to encourage economic growth. The Cabinet Member emphasised that the department is evolving in respect of tourism and stressed the importance of advancing the opportunities coming forward.

Discussions ensued and Councillor Bradwick referred Members to page 19 of the report and praised the redevelopment work of the former Boot and Black Lion Hotels. However, the Member also noted that more engagement should be undertaken with local members in respect of local letting policies. The Cabinet Member confirmed that there will indeed be a local letting policy and that the Council are in the process of looking at the impact on the community as a whole. In respect of the Boot Hotel, Councillor Bradwick noted his disappointment in the current lack of a retail occupier in the downstairs area of the building and commented that further effort is required to bring the historic building back into full use.

Councillor Cullwick referred the Committee to page 20 of the report, paragraph 6,4.3, and praised the Porth Town Centre Regeneration Strategy. The Member queried whether the Strategy would force owners of derelict buildings to bring the buildings back into use. The Member felt that the regeneration of derelict buildings would help to make Porth more attractive to visitors. The Director of Prosperity and Development agreed and informed Members that there are a range of initiatives that the Council can offer to owners of derelict buildings, such as grants, acquiring the building or the use of a compulsory purchase order. The Cabinet Member emphasised that the Council is extremely focused on town centre regeneration and noted that generally, the loss of town centre banking has led to a drop in footfall. The Cabinet Member advised Members that further initiatives include the possibility of community banking or the possibility of several different banks operating out of one facility.

Discussions continued in respect of the regeneration of town centres and Councillor Cullwick queried whether there were any plans to increase the footfall in Tonypandy. The Member felt that despite recent initiatives to develop the town centre, the footfall has continued to decline. The Cabinet Member advised Members that key development proposals are in place and will be brought forward, however, the Cabinet Member emphasised that due to its confidential and sensitive nature, further details could not be disclosed at this point.

Councillor Yeo referred the Committee to page 22 of the report and queried when the formal revision of the LDP will be adopted. The Director of Prosperity and Development informed Members that the formal revision process of the LDP is due to finish in early 2023 and that in the meantime, the Service will continue to collate further evidence in respect of the Review Report and Draft Delivery Agreement.. The Director suggested supplementary planning guidance as a way of dealing with over saturation of certain types of development in RCT's town centres.

Discussions continued in respect of Pontypridd Town Centre and Members queried how the Council could ensure that the residents benefit from the recent investments in this area. Members also raised concerns in respect of the potential impact on traffic from the Trefforest DWP development. In respect of Pontypridd Town Centre, the Director of Prosperity and Development advised Members that the Service continues to work closely with local providers and that the regeneration team has been focusing its work on expanding the local economy. The Director emphasised that there has been an influx in private sector companies who want to invest in Pontypridd. In respect of Trefforest and the potential influx of traffic, the Cabinet Member informed Members that the Leader is working closely with Transport for Wales. Members were advised that proposals will be brought forward in respect of Metro and that improved transport links will help to bring Pontypridd and Trefforest together. The Cabinet Member also emphasised the Council's desire to make town centres in RCT fit to invest in and to create a stable economy.

A number of Members praised the Council's focus on the regeneration of RCT's town centres. A number of Members agreed that whilst investment from commercial companies such as McDonald's and Starbucks are welcome, the danger is that large commercial companies often do not re-invest profits into the local economy. Councillor Cullwick referenced 'The Imperial Hotel' in Tonypandy as an example of a derelict building and commented that the Council's focus needs to be on the visual appearance of town centres. Councillor Bradwick queried why the downstairs of the Boot Hotel was still open to let. The Director of Prosperity and Development advised Members that a potential tenancy at the Boot Hotel fell through and that a meeting is scheduled to take place with the developers to discuss the tenancy arrangements. The Director confirmed that he would feedback to the Local Member accordingly.

The Vice Chair referenced sites that have been approved and started in Rhigos but subsequently abandoned. The Vice Chair queried whether this was a problem throughout RCT. In respect of the two developments in Rhigos, the Director of Prosperity and Development confirmed that he would obtain further information and update Members accordingly. The Vice Chair also queried the Council's plans in respect of building on the manufacturing industry and queried whether the Cynon gateway takes account of the Hirwaun Industrial Estate. The Cabinet Member informed Committee that the Council has opportunities for development and around Climate Change in particular. The Cabinet Member stressed that as part of the Council's LDP review, the Council would like to see development orders to bring forward other parts of the Hirwaun estate for development. The Cabinet Member emphasised that improvements to the A465 would also improve access to the Hirwaun Industrial Estate.

Discussions ensued and Councillor Yeo raised the importance of developing infrastructure in relation to the number of houses being built in and around the

M4 and A4119. The Cabinet Member agreed and stressed the importance of the Cardiff Capital Region Strategic Development Plan. In respect of infrastructure and supporting economic growth. The Cabinet Member emphasised the importance of creating employment opportunities in the South Wales Valleys and the Council's focus on creating a sustainable highway structure network.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to note the content of the update on the progress made in advancing the portfolio responsibilities of the Cabinet Member.

36   Digital Strategy

With the aid of a Power Point Presentation, the Service Director - ICT & Digital Services, provided Members with an overview of the Council's Digital Strategy 2017-20, the progress of its associated work programme and consideration of its future direction.

The Service Director reminded Members of the requirement to bring forward a new Digital Strategy for 2020-24, aligned with the new Corporate Plan. Members were advised that it is an opportunity for the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee to assess and review the progress made against the current strategy and to provide feedback on any areas of priority or refocus, which can be considered as part of the development of a new strategy.

The Service Director informed Members that the Committee would have opportunity to pre-scrutinise the Draft Digital Strategy and the Committee's feedback would be considered to be included in the Draft Strategy, which would be presented at a future committee.

Following the update, the Service Director sought feedback from the Committee and the views of Members are noted below.

Councillor Bradwick sought clarification on a number of issues, which are listed below in numerical order:-

1. He began by seeking clarification on the number of staff participating within agile working to date;
2. Councillor Bradwick praised the roll out of the Mod Gov App, however, he queried whether members from outside bodies, such as the Fire Service, could also have use of the application;
3. In respect of Apps, Councillor Bradwick queried whether an app could be produced for Members use only;
4. In respect of the Customer Relationship Management System (CRM), it was noted that some departments are slower than others when responding to customer complaints;
5. In respect of mileage claims, Councillor Bradwick sought clarification as to why this cannot be done online; and,
6. In respect of waste collections of bulky items, Councillor Bradwick questioned why residents cannot make changes to waste collection requests online.

The Service Director informed Members that approximately 1300 staff had been engaged as part of the Council's agile working initiative; and that this number is likely to increase. In respect of outside bodies using the Mod Gov App, the

Service Director advised that the ability to use software or an App was detailed as part of a contractual relationship between parties and it would be typical for an outside body to create a direct contractual link between themselves and with Mod Gov, however collaborative opportunities could be explored should they arise.

In respect of a Members App, the Service Director confirmed that this is something that could be considered as part of services to its Elected Members. With regard to the CRM, the Service Director confirmed that the procurement of a modernised CRM had been completed but in relation to the point of timely responses and that of bulky waste collections, he would raise these points with the Head of Customer Care. In respect of online mileage claims, the Service Director informed Members that the Council is in the process of procuring a new HR system, which would allow for this functionality.

With regard to outside bodies being on Mod Gov, Councillor G. Thomas commented that the National Parks used the application and referenced Bridgend County Borough Council and its work on the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. The Service Director – ICT & Digital Services advised that Mod Gov was a widely adopted business application across Wales but emphasised the need for the contractual relationship to legally use the Mod Gov licence.

Discussions ensued and Councillor Cullwick raised concerns in respect of the increased use of online self-service and its effect on the older generation. The Service Director acknowledged the need to continue to provide traditional access channels alongside digital, where appropriate and noted the importance of including this as part of RCT's Draft Digital Strategy.

Councillor G. Thomas raised a further concern in respect of remote areas where fast broadband access was limited. The Service Director confirmed that the Council worked with bodies such as Welsh Government and with private sector companies to assist the increased implementation of broadband, however it was noted that prioritisation was typically led by the private sector to areas which they see as being more advantageous to them.

The Voting Elected Parent/Governor Representative raised his concerns in respect of the disparity between infrastructures in schools across the County Borough and also queried the approach the Council was taking in respect of producing efficiency savings as part of Digital. A further query was also raised in respect of town centre Wi-Fi and how the network technology was provided. The Voting Elected Parent/ Governor Representative also sought further information as to the Council's ongoing approach to cyber security.

The Service Director - ICT & Digital Services answered each question in numerical order. In relation to the Council's infrastructure in schools, the Service Director confirmed that the Council is currently developing a strategy for digital within schools that was aligned with Welsh Governments HWB programme; this would ensure a standard and consistent approach with all Schools. In terms of efficiency savings, the Service Director informed Members that the Councils approach had been to primarily use digital as a tool to drive improvement to Council Services and to become more efficient and effective. The Service Director informed Members that the Council had taken a pragmatic approach to efficiency savings as part of digital, whereby each service could use it as a tool to assist supporting its own efficiency requirement. In respect of Wi-Fi in town centres, the Service Director advised the Committee that we are using standard

outdoor Wi-Fi technology with a backhaul of 100mb+ internet circuit in ours town centres. In respect of cyber security, Members were informed that cyber-crime had become more prevalent, however, Members were reassured that the Council had strong governance in place alongside appropriate technology controls to mitigate risk and were annually accredited for security assurance by outside bodies.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to agree to receive the updated and draft Digital Strategy for 2020-2024 for the purpose of pre-scrutiny prior to its presentation to Cabinet.

37   Report of the Director of Finance and Digital Services

The Service Director- Finance and Improvement Services provided Members with the Quarter 2 Council Performance Report (to 30th September 2019).

The Service Director referred Members to Appendix 1 of the report which contained the Council's Quarter 2 Performance Report that was presented to Cabinet on the 21st of November 2019. Members were informed that the report contains revenue and capital budget performance; treasury Management prudential indicators; Organisational Health information including staff turnover, sickness and Council strategic risks; Corporate Plan priority action plan updates; other national measures; and target setting.

The Service Director went on to provide Members with an update on progress made across the Council's Corporate Plan priorities and indicated that out of 49 performance indicators reported with a target at Quarter 2, 30 were 'on target', 7 were 'within 5% of the target' and 12 were 'not on target'.

Following the overview by the Service Director, Members scrutinised the report and put forward their questions.

In respect of the projected overspend in Waste Services of £0.436M, Councillor Bradwick informed Members that he will be requesting an update on this position as Chair of the Public Service, Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee. The Service Director advised Members that the construction of the new Materials Recycling Facility at Bryn Pica has resulted in one-off costs being incurred in the current year, for example, in making alternative arrangements for the processing of recyclable waste during the construction period, and that improved recycling performance has necessitated the purchase of a higher volume of recycling bags than anticipated at the start of the year. Councillor Bradwick informed the Committee that Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee will be visiting the new Materials Recycling Facility as part of the Committee's respective Work Programme and Councillor Bradwick extended the invitation to all Elected Members.

In respect of 'Children Looked After', Councillor Adams questioned whether the Budget had been adjusted to account for the demand on the service in times of austerity. The Service Director informed the Committee that the Children Looked After budget is demand led to ensure that appropriate resources are in place to keep children safe and provide them with a stable and positive environment. The Service Director added that due to the demand led nature of the service, actual levels of expenditure will invariably differ to the budget set at the start of the financial year, and confirmed that robust arrangements are in place to monitor

financial and operation performance.

Discussions continued in respect of 'Children Looked After' and Councillor Cullwick questioned whether RCT fund children who are placed in the County Borough from other local authorities. The Service Director advised that it would be the local authority making the placement that would be responsible for funding the care and, in such circumstances, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council would then recharge the relevant local authority.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to;

1. Endorse the Council's financial and operational performance position as at 30th September 2019 (Quarter 2).

38   Presentation - Budget Consultation 2020/21

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services provided Members with an overview of the 2020/21 Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation and updated Committee on the following areas:

- Approach for 2020/21
- Consultation
    o Council Budget 2020/21
    o The Council's Priorities
    o Council Tax Reduction Scheme
    o Draft Corporate Plan 2020 – 24
- Budget Setting Timetable

Following the update, the Service Director indicated that the overview intended to assist Members in formulating their responses to a number of questions to be posed to the Committee, in line with its Terms of Reference and as a consultee as part of the 2020/21 Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation process. The Service Director added that the feedback provided by Members would be presented to Cabinet alongside the feedback from all other consultees as part of Cabinet agreeing a proposed Budget Strategy for 2020/21.

The Service Director sought feedback from the Committee on a number of areas and the views of Members are noted below.

With regard to Question 1 on Council Tax, Members supported a less than 3% increase to help support the continuation of service provision in the context of rising cost pressures and demand for specific services. Members also commented that in setting the level of Council Tax for 2020/21 regard should be given to the level of funding the Council is anticipated to receive via the local government settlement from Welsh Government.

In respect of Question 2 on Schools Budget, Committee Members agreed that the Council should provide sufficient resources to fully cover increased pay costs in schools throughout RCT. However, a member of the Committee highlighted that other cost pressures, over and above pay costs, should also be fully funded. An elected Member fed back that the same question should also be included as part of the consultation process for Community and Children's Services and not

just in respect of schools.

For question 3 covering fees and charges, the following points were fed back:

- A number of Members considered that school meal prices should be frozen and all other areas should be increased by 1.5%, and highlighted their continued support for the promotion of free school meals;
- A Member cautioned against increasing the charges for Town Centre Car Parking and it was fed back that there should be no increase to the cost of a resident car parking permit;
- A Member cautioned against increasing the fees for Meals on Wheels and noted that the Council needs to encourage more residents to use this service;
- A Member felt that the Council should consider increasing the level of charges for tourist attractions as charges seem to be lower in comparison to other areas of Wales; and

- A number of Members considered that charges for the bulky waste collection service and pest control service should be frozen.

Following Member feedback, the Service Director provided further information on specific areas. In respect free school meals, the Service Director informed Members that transitional / protection arrangements have come into force across Wales in 2019 that mean all eligible children entitled to free school meals will retain their entitlement for a set period even if their circumstances change and no longer meet the eligibility criteria. Members indicated that they were not aware of these changes and requested further information. In respect of car parking charges, the Service Director fed back that charges are only applied in Aberdare and Pontypridd Town Centres, with different charges for short and long stay, and have been frozen for a number of years.

With regard to Question 4, Council Service priorities, Committee Members agreed that all Council services are essential and should be protected as part of the 2020/21 budget setting process.

For Question 5, delivery of efficiencies, Members agreed that setting a Council wide efficiency saving target was a good approach and that managers should be supported to deliver even more efficient services, where possible. However, Members considered that the year-on-year delivery of efficiency savings is becoming more difficult to achieve without impacting on frontline services and highlighted the importance of protecting staff as part of any future budget savings proposals. A Member also highlighted that exploiting more digital working could provide opportunities for the Council to deliver better and more efficient services.

At this point, the Service Director asked Members if there was any other general comments they would like to provide on the Council's budget, as part of Question 6. Members noted that they had no further points to feedback at this point and requested the Service Director to continue with the presentation.

Discussions continued in respect of the Council's priorities for the 2020/21 budget setting process. Members were informed that the Council focuses on five key areas to maximise resources and deliver improved services (i.e. Digitalisation; Commercialisation; Early Intervention and Prevention; Independence; and Efficient and Effective Organisation). Members were asked whether the Council should continue to focus on these areas and Members were supportive of this strategy going forward.

In respect of investment opportunities, Members were asked whether the Council should continue to invest in the priority areas listed. An elected Member raised concerns in respect of improving recycling performance and noted that Social Landlords are not engaging with the local authority. The Member emphasised that Social Landlords need to work with the Council in order to improve recycling rates across the County Borough.

A member of the Committee sought clarification in respect of the Council's investment in flood prevention schemes and sought clarity on the extent of involvement of National Resources Wales. It was noted that the flood alleviation schemes referred to are primarily Council funded projects and the Council will engage with Natural Resources Wales, as deemed appropriate, on a scheme by scheme basis.

In respect of Council reserves, Members were informed that the Council has used one off reserves (£1.1M for 2019/20) to balance its budget alongside delivering savings early in subsequent years to replenish these reserves. The Service Director added that this approach is part of a medium term financial strategy recognising that managing and balancing the revenue budget is not a one-off annual process. Members were asked whether the Council should continue with this strategy and Members agreed on the use of this strategy going forward.

With specific regard to the questions around the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, the following responses were fed back by Members:

- Do you think that 4 weeks is a reasonable period to continue paying Council Tax Reduction when someone returns to work?

    o Members agreed that 4 weeks is a reasonable period to continue paying Council Tax Reduction when someone returns to work.

- Do you think that it is reasonable for the Council to continue to totally exclude War Disablement and War Widow's Pensions income when assessing entitlement to CTR scheme?

    o Members were supportive of these elements continuing to be excluded.

- Do you think that 6 months is a reasonable period to backdate claims for working age and pensioners?

    o Members fed back their agreement that 6 months is reasonable.

Discussions ensued in respect of the Council's Draft Corporate Plan 2020-24.

Members were informed that three priorities are being proposed (People, Place and Prosperity) and Members were provided with the opportunity to provide their views on these priorities and ideas about anything else that would make a difference to the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf. Committee Members confirmed their agreement with the proposed priorities as set out in the draft Corporate Plan 2020-24.

In conclusion, the Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services informed Members that the Committee's feedback will be considered by Cabinet as part of it agreeing a draft Revenue Budget Strategy for 2020/21 and that the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee will have opportunity to further scrutinise and comment upon the 2020/21 draft Revenue Budget Strategy at its January 2020 meeting.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that the views of Members as outlined above be fed into the consultation process.

39   Chair's closing remarks

The Vice Chair thanked everyone for attending and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

This meeting closed at 7.33 pm   **CLLR G. THOMAS**
                                                                                                             VICE CHAIR.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 29th JANUARY 2020

PRE SCRUTINY FEEDBACK

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATIONS

1   PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1   The purpose of the report is to provide Members of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee with the decision of Cabinet following the pre scrutiny opportunity undertaken by this Committee of the Council's Draft Employment Strategy and Action Plan 2019/21.

2   RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:-

2.1   Acknowledge the content of the Cabinet Decision Notice (appended to the report) in response to the opportunity afforded to this Committee to undertake pre scrutiny of the Council's Draft Employment Strategy and Action Plan 2019/21.

3   BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1   Members of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee undertook pre scrutiny of the Council's Draft Employment Strategy and Action Plan 2019/21 at its meeting held on the 4th November 2019. At the meeting Committee Members discussed the draft report and provided comments.

3.2   The comments captured at the meeting were subsequently incorporated into the Draft Employment Strategy and Action Plan 2019/21, which was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on the 17th December 2019.

3.3   The Decision Notice from the meeting of the Cabinet is appended to this report for Members' information.

4.   CONCLUSION

4.1   By receiving the Cabinet Decision Notice members of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee are able to view the feedback of the Cabinet to the Pre Scrutiny opportunity, which will further strengthen the scrutiny process.

4.2   This two way process fosters greater engagement between Scrutiny and the Cabinet, enabling Scrutiny to see the benefits of its pre scrutiny opportunities on the key policy decisions of the Council.

5   EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1   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.

6   CONSULTATION

6.1   Training and advice provider partners who sit on the Strategic Employment Group have been consulted on the proposed strategy and action plan. Representatives of Learning Disability service users and their carers have also been consulted due to their expert knowledge of the barriers experienced by people with learning disabilities in relation to learning and employment.

7   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

8   LEGAL IMPLICATIONS *OR* LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

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

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

9.1 The strategy and action plan link clearly to the three main themes of the Council's Corporate Plan with its emphasis on prosperity, people and place. Developing skills and gaining and sustaining employment is the main way in which people can improve their own prosperity and enhance their health and wellbeing, while the level of employment in an area has an impact on the whole community. The report also relates to the following Wellbeing goals:

- A prosperous Wales – improving learning and skills and supporting people into employment will reduce the level of poverty in the County;
- A more equal Wales – the strategy ensures that people of all backgrounds and abilities have an equal chance to access the learning and support they need;

- A healthier Wales – ensuring access to learning and employment is recognised as having a positive impact on health and well-being; • A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language – there is a commitment to provide learning and improve confidence through offering access to provision in the medium of Welsh and also using arts as a vehicle to improve employability.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

DECISION MADE BY: Cabinet   DATE DECISION MADE: 17 December, 2019

Cabinet Members Present:

Councillor A Morgan (Chair), Councillor M Webber (Vice-Chair),
Councillor R Bevan, Councillor A Crimmings, Councillor G Hopkins,
Councillor M Norris, Councillor J Rosser, Councillor R Lewis and
Councillor C Leyshon

Other Councillor(s) in Attendance:-
Councillor Jayne Brencher
Councillor Heledd Fychan

Agenda Item : 6

SUBJECT: Employment Strategy

1.	**DECISION MADE:**

Agreed –

    To approve the Employment Strategy and Action Plan 2019/21.

2.	**REASON FOR THE DECISION BEING MADE:**

The need to provide Members with an opportunity to consider the proposed Rhondda Cynon Taf Employment Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2021.

3.	**LINKS TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES/FUTURE GENERATIONS - SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:**

The strategy and action plan link clearly to the three main themes of the Council's Corporate Plan with its emphasis on prosperity, people and place. Developing skills and gaining and sustaining employment is the main way in which people can improve their own prosperity and enhance their health and wellbeing, while the level of employment in an area has an impact on the whole community.

The report also relates to the following Wellbeing goals:
- A prosperous Wales – improving learning and skills and supporting people into employment will reduce the level of poverty in the County;
- A more equal Wales – the strategy ensures that people of all backgrounds and abilities have an equal chance to access the learning and support they need;
- A healthier Wales – ensuring access to learning and employment is recognised as having a positive impact on health and well-being;
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language – there is a commitment to provide learning and improve confidence through offering access to provision in the medium of Welsh and also using arts as a vehicle to improve employability.

4.	**CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO DECISION BEING MADE:**

Training and advice provider partners who sit on the Strategic Employment Group have been consulted on the proposed strategy and action plan. Representatives of Learning Disability service users and their carers have also been consulted due to their expert knowledge of the barriers experienced by people with learning disabilities in relation to learning and employment.

5.	**PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY A COMMITTEE OF THE COUNCIL:**

Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee – 4th November 2019.

6.	**PERSONAL INTERESTS DECLARED:**

None

7.   DISPENSATION TO SPEAK (AS GRANTED BY STANDARDS COMMITTEE):

N/A

8. (a) IS THE DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL-IN BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

Yes

Note: This decision will not come into force and may not be implemented until the expiry of 3 clear working days after its publication i.e. **23 December 2019** to enable it to be the subject to the Call-In Procedure in Rule 17.1 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

8.(b) IF NO, REASONS WHY IN THE OPINION OF THE DECISION-MAKER THE DECISION IS EXEMPT OR NON APPLICABLE:

I. *COUNCIL / SCRUTINY FUNCTION (CALL IN IS THEREFORE NON APPLICABLE):-*
Reason: N/A

II. *URGENT DECISION:-*
Reason N/A

8.(c) IF DEEMED URGENT - SIGNATURE OF PRESIDING MEMBER OR DEPUTY PRESIDING MEMBER OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE CONFIRMING AGREEMENT THAT THE PROPOSED DECISION IS REASONABLE IN ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES FOR IT BEING TREATED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 17.2:

………………………………   ………………..
(PRESIDING MEMBER)   *(Dated)*

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

PUBLICATION

Publication on the Councils Website**:-   Tuesday, 17 December 2019**

APPROVED FOR PUBLICATION: ✓

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019/20

FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

29th JANUARY 2020

CABINET AND SCRUTINY ENGAGEMENT

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

Author: Paul Griffiths (Service Director – Finance and Improvement Services – 01443 680609)

1.0   PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1   The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the progress made in advancing the portfolio responsibilities of the Cabinet Member.

2.0   RECOMMENDATION

2.1   It is recommended that Members consider and scrutinise the content of the report.

3.0   REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

3.1   To challenge any arising matters or issues with the relevant Cabinet Member and to ensure that the appropriate mechanisms are in place to effectively scrutinise the Executive.

4.0   BACKGROUND

4.1   On the 22nd January, 2018, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered a report regarding the engagement of the Executive at future Scrutiny Committees going forward.

4.2   At the meeting Members agreed to receive Cabinet Members at future Scrutiny meetings to present relevant information relating to their portfolio areas, alongside the relevant Director.

4.3   Such an approach will provide Scrutiny Members with the opportunity to further challenge the Executive, as the Cabinet Members can provide details (both verbal and written) relating to the potential challenges facing the services, as well as the opportunities and policy changes currently being considered. This approach would allow each Cabinet Member the opportunity to update Scrutiny Members on the delivery of their respective areas of the Corporate Plan, reference Key Performance Indicators and important details of policies being considered for future decisions, which are referenced for future business, or those which have been developed since the last publicised Work Programme.

4.4   An overview of the functional areas within the Cabinet Portfolio and progress update is set out in Section 5.

5. **Cabinet Portfolio – Main functional areas of accountability and responsibility**

5.1 **Accountancy Services and Performance and Resources**

<u>Functional Areas</u>

5.1.1 Accountancy Services - the primary function of the service is to ensure that the Council meets its legal responsibilities to arrange for the proper administration of its financial affairs. This includes: Revenue and Capital budget setting, monitoring and year end closure of service's accounts; External funding and taxation; Financial reporting (production of the Council's Statement of Accounts, technical capital accounting, managing the Council's Asset Register, Systems, Bank Reconciliation and development of income systems); Treasury Management and Pension Fund Accounting, Investments and Governance; and co-ordinating the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning (MTFP) arrangements.

5.1.2 Performance and Resources - the Service's primary function is to coordinate the Council's corporate performance management arrangements and ensure the Council meets its statutory responsibilities in this regard. This includes setting the Council's Service Self Evaluation and Service Delivery Plan frameworks and coordinating / supporting Services in their completion; undertaking the Council's annual corporate assessment; supporting the compilation of the Council's quarterly Performance Reports (including reviews of the robustness of performance data); production of the Council's Corporate Performance Report; and supporting specific projects e.g. coordinating updates on the work being undertaken by the Council to progress recommendations made by the WAO, corporate safeguarding and Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

<u>2019/20 Key Priorities and Progress Update</u>

5.1.3 The key priorities for 2019/20 and main areas of progress (as at December 2019 unless otherwise stated) is included in Table 1.

Table 1 – Accountancy Services: Key priorities and progress

Key Priority	Progress Update and Performance	Areas for on-going focus

Delivery of robust in-year financial management and reporting arrangements	• Coordinating and supporting arrangements to ensure the Council maintains its financial stability:
	  o Unqualified external audit opinion by the Wales Audit Office (WAO) (i.e. clean bill of health) on the Council's and Pension Fund 2018/19 Statement of Accounts (SoAs). The external audit process was completed and SoAs approved by Council 31st July 2019 (2 years in advance of the statutory date).
	  o General Fund balances maintained above minimum level of £10Million as at 31st March 2019.
	  o Robust revenue and capital budget monitoring arrangements.
	• Early identification of savings in 2019/20 to support additional one-off investment (over £95Million since 2015) and support revenue base budget savings for 2020/21.
	• Regular reporting of financial and performance information together with a programme of support to scrutiny committees to help further develop understanding of the Council's budgets and aid effective scrutiny.
		• Working with services to bring the Council wide projected over-spend (as at Qtr 2 of £1.761M) closer in line with budget.
		• Implementation of process related recommendations reported by the WAO (based on the audit of the 2018/19 SoAs) to help further improve the closure of accounts process for 2019/20.

Maintenance and refresh of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)	• MTFP refreshed and reported to Council (31st July 2019). • The MTFP has been updated on an on-going basis and has formed the starting point in developing the Senior Leadership Team's report to Cabinet (23rd January 2020) as part of Cabinet determining a draft Revenue Budget Strategy for the 2020/2021 financial year.	• Lead arrangements to enable the Council to set a Revenue Budget and Council Tax levels for the 2020/2021 financial year and updated 3 year Capital Programme in March 2020. • Further refresh and reporting of a robust MTFP. • On-going work with services to identify and where appropriate to do so, the early delivery of budget savings.
Provision of robust financial	• Continued to support a range of strategic and transformational projects across the Council to deliver positive outcomes and visible improvements for residents, for example, StayWell@Home2, Llys Cadwyn, 21st Century	• Continued close working with services and partners to support the delivery of

Key Priority	Progress Update and Performance	Areas for on-going focus
management support to key projects across the Council	schools (including Band B Mutual Investment Model), Welsh Government's Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme for town centre regeneration projects (RCT lead for £10M across the 10 City Deal LAs over 3 years) and Valleys Taskforce Empty Homes Grant (RCT lead for £10M across the 9 Valleys Taskforce LAs over 2 years - to implement RCT's own Empty Properties Grant scheme across the region); Absorbent Hygiene Products treatment services (all Wales); Extracare strategy; and continuation of Residual Waste and Food Waste regional contracts.	strategic and transformation projects across the County Borough.
Modernisation of the Service through the application of up-to-date digital technology and agile working	• Agile working and Office 365 pilot underway and further roll-out planned across the Service in 2020. • A programme of work to digitise paper records to improve work-flow arrangements and records management. • Preparations for relocation of officers to Oldway House (Porth town centre). • Continued investment in staff development, including apprentice and graduate positions.	• Roll-out of agile working and Office 365 technology across the Service. • Continued staff development and investment, including apprentice and graduate officers.
Work with Services to further improve performance management arrangements	• Coordination and delivery of the 2019/20 Service Self Evaluation and Service Delivery Planning arrangements and the Council's Corporate Assessment. • WAO review and issuing of compliance certificates for the Council's Corporate Performance Report[1]. • Supporting the drafting and consultation arrangements for the Council's new draft Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024.	• Finalisation of new Corporate Plan and report to full Council. • Subject to the Local Government and Election (Wales) Bill being passed, assess the performance management implications for the Council together with actions required to ensure compliance with the legislation.

[1] Corporate Performance Report – this document sets out a review of the Council's Corporate Plan performance for the preceding year and sets out actions to support the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan for the next year – this being an annual requirement for all local authorities in Wales in line with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

5.2 **Pensions, Procurement and Transactional Services** (formerly **Operational Finance Services, and Procurement)**

From the 1st April 2019, responsibility for the following functional areas were combined to create the new Pensions, Procurement and Transactional Services area.

<u>Functional Areas</u>

5.2.1 Pensions – the primary function is to deliver the Council's statutory responsibilities as Scheme Manager/Administering Body of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Pension Fund, on behalf of all participating Employers and Scheme Members. The Rhondda Cynon Taf Pension Fund is the largest local authority occupational pension scheme in Wales, with overall membership exceeding 73,000 individuals. The Fund forms part of the national pension scheme for local authorities, the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). Pension Fund Governance requirements are defined in regulations and guidance and include a (politically balanced) Pension Fund Committee and a Pension Fund Board, it is not a function of the Executive.

5.2.2 Procurement – the Procurement Service forms an integral part of the Council's contract management and purchasing arrangements for supplies and services, ensuring that value for money is achieved via competitive arrangements, and that all suppliers are dealt with in a fair, equitable way in compliance with the appropriate legislation. The Service collaborates closely with both existing and potential new partner organisations, including the Welsh Government / National Procurement Service and other Local Authorities, to seek opportunities to achieve procurement efficiencies, reducing costs and ensure that the Council's best interests are secured.

5.2.3 Transactional Services (includes Payroll, Payments, Council Tax, Business Rates, Benefit Claims, Credit Management, and Corporate Fraud) – the primary functions of these services are to deliver all operational and transactional financial activities, providing key frontline financial functions to customers and residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf for Benefits, Council Tax and Business Rates. It also provides key internal business support services such as Payroll and Payments (for the Council's creditors) and the Credit Management (for collection of all sundry debtor bills issued). The majority of the functions provided by these service streams are statutory or essential business support functions.

<u>2019/20 Key Priorities and Progress Update</u>

5.2.4 The key priorities for 2019/20 and main areas of progress (as at December 2019 unless otherwise stated) is included in Table 2.

Table 2 – Pensions, Procurement and Transactional Services: Key priorities and progress

Key Priority	Progress Update and Performance	Areas for on-going focus
Further embed the revised and evolving LG Pension Fund Governance arrangements and support delivery of the 2019 Triennial Valuation.	• Embedding the Local Pension Committee and Pension Board within the Fund's governance arrangements and in accordance with Pension Governance Legislation, the Pension Regulator and the National Scheme Advisory Board (includes reviewing / publishing a number of Fund supporting governance documents in accordance with statutory deadlines). • The Wales Pension Partnership (WPP) collaboration continues to make good progress against key milestones. • Continued staff development, including appointment to apprentice positions. • The 2019 actuarial valuation of the Fund commenced on 31st March 2019 with certified results due by 31st March 2020.	• Support the development of WPP governance frameworks and arrangements. • Review and update, where required, the Fund's Governance documents. • Continued monitoring and updating of the Fund's 'Risk Register'. • On-going focus to promote Member Self-Serve.

Manage the consequences of the implementation of the UK Government's welfare reform agenda within the Benefits Service and support work to minimise the impact on citizens.	• The Service is represented at the DWP/WLGA led workshops for Universal Credit (UC) to exchange experiences and learn from others.
	• The Service supports the Council 'Task and Finish Group' to ensure aims and ambitions of UC are realised in RCT and to avoid unintended consequences for residents, landlords and communities.
	• Performance Information:
	  o Council Tax / NDR / Benefits Speed of Processing - on or ahead of target.
	  o Debtors & Overpayments Collection – reduction in Housing Benefit overpayment debt and sundry debt collection is better than average. The Council also continues to collect social care debt in line with the principles Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.
		• The timescales for full roll out of Universal Credit remains subject to confirmation - the Service will closely monitor and participate in the relevant stakeholder forums to ensure the Council is well positioned for this.
		• Continue to monitor any implications on citizens eligible to claim Council Tax Relief, post implementation of UC, and ensure claimants are informed of eligibility for Free School Meals at point of contact with DWP.

Key Priority	Progress Update and Performance	Areas for on-going focus
Maximise information technology applications to help drive service performance improvement and improve customer access through further digital transformation.	• As 'Transactional Services', improvements in technology and the growing digital appetite of our customers will continue to inform the pace of service improvement into the medium term. • Across the Service there are a number of e-initiatives that have either been introduced or in progress. Take-up rates by our customers is gradual, and promoting and signposting to wider digital support programmes is on-going.	• On-going work to further improve take-up and promote the benefits of self-serve / e-engagement. • Further enhance e-functionality through the implementation of a new HR/Payroll system, to include an employment depositary to communicate, for example, e-employment contracts.
Provide specialist procurement advice and support in the delivery of strategic projects by ensuring appropriate resources are available and are allocated accordingly.	• Supported delivery of key Council strategic projects, for example, Llys Cadwyn, Bryn Pica Eco Park, 21st Century Schools, Extra Care and Support. • Facilitate networking opportunities, for example, through the annual 'Meet the Buyer' event. • Good track record of working in collaboration with neighbouring organisations, utilising framework contracts of others and leading on contracts on behalf of others. Examples include: 'The Provision of Substance Misuse Services Across Cwm Taf', 'All Wales Looked After Children', 'The Maintenance of Traffic Control and Associated'.	• Continuing to work with services to enhance and improve contract management arrangements. • Supporting the Council's 'net zero' ambitions, through targeted procurement activity. • Linking the 'Meet the Buyer' event with the Council's Careers event. • Supporting the realignment of the National Procurement Service contract portfolio.

5.3   **ICT & Digital Services** (formerly ICT Operational Services & Digitalisation Strategy)

5.3.1 From the 1st April 2019, responsibility for the following functional areas were combined to create the new ICT & Digital Services area.

Functional Areas

5.3.2 ICT Operational Services - the primary function of the service is to ensure that the Councils ICT systems are available and functional to deliver the day to day business requirements of users. This includes the provision of a single point of contact Service Desk, which facilitates reactive/proactive maintenance, upgrades, monitoring, orders, contracts and support to requests for assistance in relation to ICT. Operations include support for areas such as User Devices, Networks, Telephones, Print, Data Centre, Servers/Storage, Applications/Software and Internet.

5.3.3 Digital Improvement Office – the primary function of the service is to provide Digital Advisory, Improvement, Implementation and Project Management support to enable the delivery of the Council's Digital Strategy. This includes the identification and design of digital solutions, centralised programme management of activities and supporting the adoption of new technologies with users to maximise outcome benefits.

5.3.4 Information Management – the primary function of the service is to ensure that the Council manages its information in accordance with legislation and regulatory requirements. This includes areas such as the General Data Protection Regulation, Data Protection Act 2019, Public Services Network and Payment Card Industry Standard. The service also provides specialist advice, information and support to services & Schools with regard to data compliance, training, awareness, ICT security and data protection.

2019/20 Key Priorities and Progress Update

5.3.5 The key priorities for 2019/20 and main areas of progress (as at December 2019 unless otherwise stated) is included in Table 3.

Table 3 - ICT & Digital Services: Key priorities and progress

Key Priority	Progress Update and Performance	Areas for on-going focus
Digital Strategy - Drive and effectively support the delivery of digital transformation for our Workplace, Businesses, Residents and Visitors	• Roll out of agile working to over 1,300 staff (completed at Ty Trevithick, Ty Glantaf and Ty Elai. On-going at Bronwydd & Ty Sardis) and Microsoft Office 365 roll-out in progress (over 650 enabled to date). • Interactive Digital Meeting rooms now in place across key sites and agile 'hot desk' areas. • Work on-going to transform use of data e.g. joining up data from multiple sources e.g. Adult Services. • Supported key service based projects. Examples include Community Hubs, Llys Cadwyn, Customer Relationship Management System, HR/Payroll and Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS).	• The Digital Strategy 2020-24 is currently being drafted. • On-going roll-out of agile working and Office 365. • Use of Data - proof of concept developments are currently under way with Waste Management.
Data & Information Management: Drive Data Improvements whilst ensuring the Council is compliant with Legislation & Security Standards	• Work continues corporately on Risk & Impact Assessments, Event & Incident management procedures, Asset Audits & Privacy Impact Assessments. • The Council provides (from 2019) Data Protection support services to all Schools (all schools are signed up via Service Level Agreements). • Public Services Network (PSN) application for renewal has been submitted. • Payment Card Industry (PCI) accreditation was gained in April 2019 (renewal due April 2020). • Cyber Essential accreditation achieved.	• Continue to ensure ongoing work with Council Services and Schools to meet GDPR requirements. • PSN / PCI on-going compliance and review programme in place.
Deliver First Class Infrastructure: To improve the Council's core ICT Infrastructure, providing a robust and resilient platform to enable business operations and our digital Improvements. Continue with the core Infrastructure refresh & improvement	Datacentre developed at Rhondda Fach and is in process of being migrated to. The new facility provides a modernised environment that has increased resilience and capacity to deliver ongoing ICT operations. • Investment in infrastructure, for example, storage and servers replaced; increased and improved WiFi at key Council Sites, Community venues and Town Centre WiFi Live in Mountain Ash and Aberdare (with others Town Centres to follow shortly); and Broadband improvements, • Windows 10 Desktops being implemented and Citrix systems upgraded. • Standardised desktop devices to Microsoft Office 2016 within Council ahead of migration to Office365. Office365 upgrades have been initiated in line with the Digital Programme. • Supported migration of systems to the Cloud.	• Complete migration of Datacentre. • Complete Town Centre WiFi rollout. • Continue with refresh of infrastructure.

5.4 **One4all & Contact Centres (Customer Care)**

Functional Areas

5.4.1 Customer Access Multi-Channel Services – the multi-channel delivery of the Council's customer experience, providing easy access to information and services, ensuring enquiries are efficiently resolved at the first point of contact and that customers are satisfied with their experience. This is delivered through a range of Advisor Services: face to face, telephone, email and web chat) where interventions are based on need and a focus on vulnerable clients, and also promoting digital channels / self-service option.

5.4.2 Customer Improvement Service – reviewing and improving customer facing and back-office processes to put the customer in control (for example, personalised 'My Leisure' account), supporting the delivery of policy through regular communication with and advice to residents (for example, the Council policies around recycling arrangements and Adult Social Care support, and national policies for areas such as Universal Credit, Transport for Wales changes and Blue Badges).

2019/20 Key Priorities and Progress Update

5.4.3 The key priorities for 2019/20 and main areas of progress (as at December 2019 unless otherwise stated) is included in Table 4.

Table 4 – One4all & Contact Centres (including Web Transactions): Key priorities and progress

Key Priority	Progress Update and Performance			Areas for on-going focus
Deliver One Front Door – Multi Channel (Supporting Internal and External Customer)	• On-going focus to further develop and offer more services on-line to customers - over 100 services provided on-line to date and a further 80 planned. Latest information shows - Interactions: 87.8% via website vs other channels • An increasing proportion of on-line volumes: 36% in 2016/17 rising to 67.6% in 2019/20 (as at quarter 2). • Positive website take up (projection for 2019/20 based on quarters 1 and 2 information)			• On-going work to make available more services on-line (including web chat and on-line services to businesses) to provide customers with a range of multi-access options to conveniently and easily transact with the Council (at the same time as
	Customer On Line - Website	**Contact Centre**	**Customer One4aLL**	
	2,983,530 visits (74.5% mobile)	356,242 (advice)	64,690 visits	

Key Priority	Progress Update and Performance	Areas for on-going focus
	• Customer resolution and satisfaction positive: |	Resolution	Satisfaction
One4aLLs	97.8%	98.2%
C/Centre	97.8%	98.2%
Web	87.8%	86.7% | • On-going focus on investing in multi skilled advisors, making available 'easy to use' web forms for customers and designing on-line services as close as possible to GOV.UK and private sector good practice, underpinned by technology. • Processes have been streamlined and automated to improve customer experience and offer 24 / 7 access, for example, Nappy Recycling. • Work continuing to channel more services via Customer Services, for example: extended Social Care functions in contact centre to support 'Stay well at Home' (Lifeline 24/365 response and daytime first response). • Providing customer services for collaborative / regional arrangements, for example, South Wales Parking Group, Cwm Taf Fostering, contact centre developments for the Cwm Taf Local Health Board including alignment to 111 telephone service.	ensuring that those who do not have access to online services are not disadvantaged). • Continue to support waste services with 'in cab' technology. • Embed Social Care functions to support 'Stay well at Home' for Lifeline 24/365 response, daytime first response and future proactive calling to vulnerable clients.

Key Priority	Progress Update and Performance	Areas for on-going focus
Customer Systems and insight	• Procurement process completed for a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. • Lifeline 'panic alarm' system upgraded to support the Council's Assistive Technology Strategy (with evaluation of the model to be undertaken).	• Implementation of the new CRM system (including development of My Account and Member Portal). • Procure a Contact Centre upgrade to support RCT and Cwm Taf GP Out of Hours services aligned to the telephone number 111. • Implement plans to further enhance customer involvement in online service development (e.g. working with RCT Panels (Staff, Citizen, Youth Forum etc). • Programme of payment kiosk upgrades scheduled. • Pilot of 'card only' payment kiosk at Llwys Cadwyn.
Consolidate Admin and Develop Corporate Business Support Unit	• Consolidation of admin / business support pilot completed at the Council's Ty Elai site (and evaluation confirmed that pilot was fit for purpose). • Hybrid Mail solutions[2] developed at Central Print/Mail Unit (Ty Elai). • Supporting service projects across the Council e.g. back-scanning of files to develop service digitisation arrangements, review of Print, Mail and Scanning and providing a central archive for key documents.	• Further consolidation of admin / business support functions. • Pilot hybrid mail arrangements for the South Wales Parking Service (with lessons learned informing improvement opportunities for business support functions).

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[2] Hybrid Mail – ability to send mail requests electronically to a central print facility for printing, packing and posting (where the distribution of paper documentation is deemed required).

5.5 **Corporate Estates (including Design and Property Maintenance, Estates Management, Legal Property and Energy and Utilities Management / Carbon Reduction Commitment)**

<u>Functional Areas</u>

5.5.1 Estates Management - the primary function of the service is to manage the Council's property portfolio to ensure that premises are fit for purpose, secured on appropriate terms and meet the Council's operational and strategic aims. This includes managing the Capital Receipts programme; leading and delivering the office accommodation strategy; facilitating Town Centre regeneration; producing the Corporate Asset Management Plan and monitoring the key work streams of the Plan; and managing the corporate database of property asset information.

5.5.2 Legal Property – the primary function of the service is to deliver a first class conveyancing service to the Council, to ensure that the Council is able to deliver key objectives, targets and services (with a property element) and achieve its property management duties. This includes the sale and acquisition of land and buildings including options, overage and conditional contracts; commercial leases including rent reviews and break clauses; reporting on title deeds; tenancy agreements, licences and wayleaves; placing charges for Empty Property Grants and Low cost housing schemes; protecting the Council's property portfolio by advising on adverse possession claims; and compliance with statutory duties.

5.5.3 Property Maintenance - the primary function of the service is to ensure that the Council's buildings are maintained and are safe in accordance with legislation. This includes reactive/responsive (day-to-day) maintenance; emergency 'Out of Hours' response to property related issues, including dangerous structures; minor works project design and contract procurement/management of individual projects; management and monitoring of statutory compliance such as asbestos, legionella, electrical and mechanical engineering services plant and equipment.

5.5.4 Corporate Design – the primary function of the service is to project manage and deliver construction capital projects and smaller refurbishment projects. This includes capital projects for Education and Inclusion Services, Community and Children's Services and Prosperity Development and Frontline Services with an average budget over the past 3 years of £15m per year; provide and maintain asset management drawings for all buildings/sites within the Council; and undertake space planning exercises to help inform decisions around the reduction / optimal use of buildings.

5.5.5 Energy – the primary function of the service is to reduce the amount of energy the Council uses; reducing the amount of CO_2 emissions from Council premises via implementation of a range of interventions to reduce consumption of energy

5.5.6 During 2019/20 the Service has continued to focus on staff development to support the delivery of its key priorities.

2019/20 Key Priorities and Progress Update

5.5.7 The key priorities for 2019/20 and main areas of progress (as at December 2019 unless otherwise stated) is included in Table 5.

Table 5 – Corporate Estates: Key priorities and progress

Key Priority	Progress Update and Performance	Areas for on-going focus
Make best use of the Council's land and building portfolio	• Reduction in office accommodation 25.09% (compared to target of 25%), with office accommodation layouts being planned to make best use of agile working solutions and use of recycled furniture. • A single storage solution for residual office furniture acquired and utilised. • On-going close working across Council services to effectively support the Capital Programme and additional one-off investment in Corporate Plan priority areas. • Proactive management of the Council's property portfolio.	• On-going programme of office accommodation rationalisation (supported by agile working and technological developments such as Office 365). • Undertake preparatory work to support the development of the new three year capital programme (2020/21 to 2022/23).
Support the Regeneration of Rhondda Cynon Taf	• A number of acquisitions of strategic properties have been completed as part of the Town Centre Regeneration project. • Supporting the development of community hubs e.g. the former Mountain Ash Day Centre is now a community hub with a third sector café provider and the former Ferndale Infants School is a community hub providing a range of community based services including the relocation and enhancement of Ferndale Library and a childcare facility (will hub will also deliver the Council's commitments to the Welsh Government's Children First Initiative).	• Working with Council Services to explore further opportunities to support Town Centre regeneration, in line with service needs, and support the on-going programme of service transformation through the establishment of Community Hubs.
Continued provision of technical support	• Progressing the final phase of Tonyrefail and Treorchy School projects, that are on target to complete in June 2020.	• Participate in the 21st Century Schools programme to ensure the

Key Priority	Progress Update and Performance	Areas for on-going focus
to Service Groups for the delivery of projects/programmes and in particular, the Education 21st Century Schools Band B Programme and delivery of the Taff Vale (Llys Cadwyn) Regeneration project	• Support the Band B consultation process. The new Hirwaun Primary School will be the first Band B project and works commenced on site in September 2019. • Delivered a range of large scale projects (including Cwmaman Primary School, Ysgol Nantgwyn, Porth Community School, Tonyrefail Community School, Llys Cadwyn, Leisure Centre refurbishments and Data Centre relocation) and smaller refurbishment projects (including Cymmer Primary School & Y.G.G. Tonyrefail).	programme continues to be monitored and managed within agreed time and budget constraints.
Maintain compliance with legislation for the ongoing maintenance and operation of buildings and ensure there are no unforeseen /unplanned building closures	• We have kept all of our buildings open and complied with our targets for Statutory Maintenance Compliance, Asbestos Management and Legionnella Management (with contract expiry dates are continually reviewed). • More than 10,000 day to day and planned maintenance calls have been handled.	• Implementation of new / upgraded Asset Management System (cloud based) to improve the use of technology (and associated staff training). • On-going staff development and investment e.g. Health and Safety.
Energy and Utilities Management, which effectively manages and reduces energy and other utilities consumption whilst delivering corporate Energy projects and complying with our Energy and Carbon Reduction commitments	• Invest to Save projects are progressing (delivered 67 energy projects (circa £1M) and saved more than 900 tonnes of CO2). • Working on major Energy projects for Wind and Solar development with anticipated carbon savings and financial benefits.	• Develop the next phase of 'Invest to Save' projects for 2020/21. • Develop the ongoing work on major energy projects for Wind and Solar development and report findings to the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group. • Draft an Energy Management Strategy for consideration.

5.6 **Internal Audit**

Functional Areas

5.6.1 The Council's Internal Audit Service joined an existing regional internal audit service with effect from 1st April 2019, as approved by Cabinet on 21st June 2018.

5.6.2 The Council's Section 151 Officer is part of the new joint governance arrangements for the Regional Internal Audit Service, with the Vale of Glamorgan Council being the lead and employing local authority. The local authorities that comprise the regional service (i.e. Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Vale of Glamorgan Councils) have signed up to a Partnership Agreement for a period of not less than 3 years and the level, quality and range of internal audit services provided to Rhondda Cynon Taf by the Regional Service is the same as that in place prior to April 2019. Updates are reported to the Council's Audit Committee in terms of the current work of the Regional Service and also on plans for the future.

5.6.3 The Council's S 151 Officer will continue to work closely with representatives of the Regional Service to ensure the range and standard of services in place are in line with the Partnership Agreement, utilise the expertise of the Regional Service to support Audit Committee in delivering its Terms of Reference and contribute to the on-going development of the Regional Service.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no negative / adverse equality or diversity implications associated with this report.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 There are no consultation implications aligned to this report.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

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

10.1 The service areas that comprise the 'Corporate Services' Cabinet portfolio are a mix of front and back-office services, and directly and indirectly support the Council in delivering its Corporate Plan priorities and in doing so align with the principles set out in the Well-Being of Future Generations Act.

11.0 CONCLUSION

11.1 The 'Corporate Services' Cabinet portfolio comprises a wide range of functions, some providing direct frontline services to residents such as Customer Care, Council Tax, Business Rates and Benefit Claims and others providing key support services to frontline services.

11.2 Each progress update for 2019/20 is consistently underpinned by sound service planning, good and joined up working relationships within and between Council services and on-going investment in staff development.

11.3 The work completed to date is wide ranging, is taking advantage of technological and digital advancements and is focussed on working in partnership with others to make positive and visible impacts across the County Borough.

11.4 As part of robust planning arrangements, areas for on-going focus have been identified that will support continued improvement in and transformation of service delivery.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

29th JANUARY 2020

FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

CABINET AND SCRUTINY ENGAGEMENT

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

Item: 5

Officer to contact: Paul Griffiths (01443 680609)

Tudalen wag

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019 / 2020

FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
29th January 2020

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES

Author : Barrie Davies (01443) 424026

1.0   PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1   This report provides Members with the opportunity to scrutinise Treasury Management information presented to Council on 27th November 2019. The Council report is attached at Appendix 1 and details:

- The Council's Treasury Management activity during the first six months of 2019/20;
- Prudential and Treasury Indicators for the same period; and
- The updated Treasury Management Policy Statement and Clauses.

2.0   RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

2.1   Scrutinise and comment on the information provided; and,

2.2   Consider whether they wish to receive further detail on any matters contained in the report.

3.0   EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

3.1   The report provides an overview of the Council's Treasury Management activities during the first six months of 2019/20 in line with the Treasury Management and Capital Strategies approved by Council in March 2019. As a result, no Equality Impact Assessment is required for the purposes of this report.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 Following consideration by Council, this report will be presented to the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee in line with the laid down code of practice "CIPFA Treasury management in the Public Services 2017" and also the Terms of Reference for this Committee

5.0   FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

5.1   The financial results / implications of the Council's Treasury Management arrangements during the first six months of 2019/20 have been incorporated into quarterly Performance Reports during the year.

6.0   LEGAL IMPLICATIONS *OR* LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

6.1   The report ensures the Council complies with its legal duty under the Local Government Act 2003 and in doing so is in line with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

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

7.1   This report evidences the progress made in delivering the Council's Corporate Plan – '*The Way Ahead'* in particular through supporting the 'Living Within Our Means' theme by pursuing optimum treasury management performance or return at the same time as managing associated risk.

7.2   The report also supports the Well-being of Future Generations Act in particular 'a globally responsible Wales' through responsible management and investment of the Council's resources.

8.0   CONCLUSION

8.1   This report, together with Appendix 1, provides Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the activities of Treasury Management for the first six months of financial year 2019/20

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019 / 2020

COUNCIL

27th November 2019

2019/20 MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT STEWARDSHIP REPORT

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES : Barrie Davies (01443) 424026

1.0   PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1   The CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management requires a Mid Year Review to be presented to Council. This report provides Members with information on:-

- The Council's Treasury Management activity during the first six months of 2019/20; and
- Prudential and Treasury Indicators for the same period.

1.2   To approve the updated Treasury Management Policy Statement and Clauses (Appendix 1).

2.0   RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1   It is recommended that Members:

2.1.1   Note the content of this report; and

2.1.2   Approve the Treasury Management Policy Statement and Clauses (Appendix 1).

3.0 INTRODUCTION

3.1 This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

3.2 The Treasury Management function operates within the Treasury Management Strategy and Capital Strategy, both approved by Council on the 27th March 2019.

3.3 Treasury Management is defined as:
"The management of the organisation's borrowing, investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."

3.4 The Council sets a balanced budget to ensure that all planned expenditure is financed by various sources of income / reserves. Treasury Management is concerned with monitoring the cash flows of such income and expenditure and planning investments and borrowing prudently.

3.5 This report includes the following areas of treasury activity during the first six months of 2019/20:

- Economic background;
- Borrowing activity and results;
- Estimated and actual treasury position, treasury management and prudential indicators; and
- Investment strategy, activity and results.

4.0 ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

4.1 General Economic Background

4.2 The Council's investment income is subject to changes in short term interest rates. The level of the Bank Base Rate or 'Bank Rate' is one of the main determinants of the rate of interest the Council receives on its short-term investments. The Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee has maintained the Bank Rate at 0.75% throughout this financial year to date and, in its August 2019 Inflation Report, noted that the outlook for global growth has deteriorated a little, impacted by trade tensions between the US and China. The August Report also confirmed that the UK economic outlook would continue to depend significantly on the nature and timing of its withdrawal from the European Union.

4.3 In line with the outlook set out above, the UK economy has displayed a slowdown in growth, with the Office for National Statistics reporting a Quarter 2 growth rate of -0.2%. The latest statistics for the three months to August 2019 shows the unemployment rate at 3.9%, lower than a year earlier

(4.0%). Real wages (that is, after allowing for inflation), excluding bonuses increased by 2.0% during the year to August 2019.

4.4 The Consumer Price Index (CPI) fell to 1.7% in August 2019, from 2.0% in July 2019, and remained at 1.7% for September 2019. This rate is below the Bank of England's target of 2%.

4.5 The majority of the Council's borrowing is from the PWLB (Public Works Loans Board). Long-term borrowing rates are influenced by gilt yields and, in the first six months of this financial year, the cost of borrowing from PWLB had fallen to record lows. However, on 9th October 2019 HM Treasury raised PWLB interest rates by 1%, to restore interest rates to levels available in 2018, with the higher rate to apply to all new loans from this date.

4.6 PWLB maturity rates (certainty rate) during the first half of the financial year were as follows:

	5 years	10 years	20 years	50 years
Average	1.38%	1.66%	2.15%	2.07%
Highest	1.76%	2.10%	2.53%	2.41%
Lowest	1.00%	1.15%	1.66%	1.57%

4.7 Estimates of future rates are as follows:

	Base Rate	PWLB Maturity Rates			
		5 years	10 years	20 years	50 years
2019/20 (Act 6 mth Average)	0.75%	1.38%	1.66%	2.15%	2.07%
31/03/20[1]	0.75%	2.20%	2.35%	2.80%	2.75%
31/03/21[1]	0.75%	2.30%	2.55%	2.95%	2.90%

5.0 REGULATORY AND CODE OF PRACTICE UPDATES

5.1 In September 2019, Welsh Government issued a consultation on the statutory guidance on Local Government investments. The Welsh Government recognises that local authorities will hold investments for different purposes and therefore the proposed revised regulations make a distinction between investments held for treasury management purposes and those held for commercial purposes. The definition of investments is widened to include "all of the financial and non-financial assets a local authority has invested money into primarily or partially for the purpose of generating a surplus including investment property". The revised guidance would be effective from April 2020.

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[1] PWLB Maturity Rates (31/3/20 and 31/3/21) – includes the PWLB interest rate increase that was effective from 9th October 2019.

5.2 Included at Appendix 1 is an updated Treasury Management Policy Statement and Clauses. The Policy Statement and Clauses have been updated in line with the latest guidance including the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes. The Treasury Management Policy Statement defines the policies and objectives of the Council's treasury management activities.

6.0 BORROWING ACTIVITY AND RESULTS

6.1 The borrowing strategy for 2019/20, approved by Council in March 2019, reported that the Director of Finance and Digital Services, as Section 151 Officer (or in his absence the Deputy Section 151 Officer), under delegated powers, will take the most appropriate form of borrowing depending upon the prevailing interest rates at the time, and taking into account advice provided by our advisors.

6.2 In March, the borrowing requirement was estimated to be £44.0m based on the Capital Programme at that time. The borrowing requirement for 2019/20 has increased to £46.7m as at 30th September 2019. The increase is due to revised delivery timescales for projects, including the re-profiling of expenditure on school modernisation projects.

6.3 It was also reported that the Council would monitor prevailing PWLB rates for any opportunities to reschedule debt to generate savings. I can report that to the 30th September this financial year, the Council has not had a viable option to reschedule debt. Affordability and the cost of carry remained important influences on the Council's borrowing strategy. Whilst short-term borrowing was taken during the first half of 2019/20, the Council also took the opportunity, in line with advice, to take longer-term debt, to take advantage of favourable PWLB rates.

6.4 A breakdown of PWLB long term borrowing undertaken during the first six months of the year is set out below:

Date	Loan Type	PWLB Loan Amount	Period	Rate
		£M		%
5th July 2019	EIP(Certainty Rate)	30.000	15 years	1.41
5th August 2019	EIP(Certainty Rate)	10.000	15 years	1.30
6th August 2019	EIP(Certainty Rate)	10.000	15 years	1.25
29th August 2019	EIP(Certainty Rate)	10.000	12.5 years	1.06
5th September 2019	EIP(Certainty Rate)	20.000	12.5 years	1.00
Total		**80.000**		

The EIP rate refers to the half yearly equal instalments of principal repayments of the loan.

The graph below shows the changes in the longer term PWLB borrowing rates during the first six months:

PWLB Maturity (Certainty) Rates
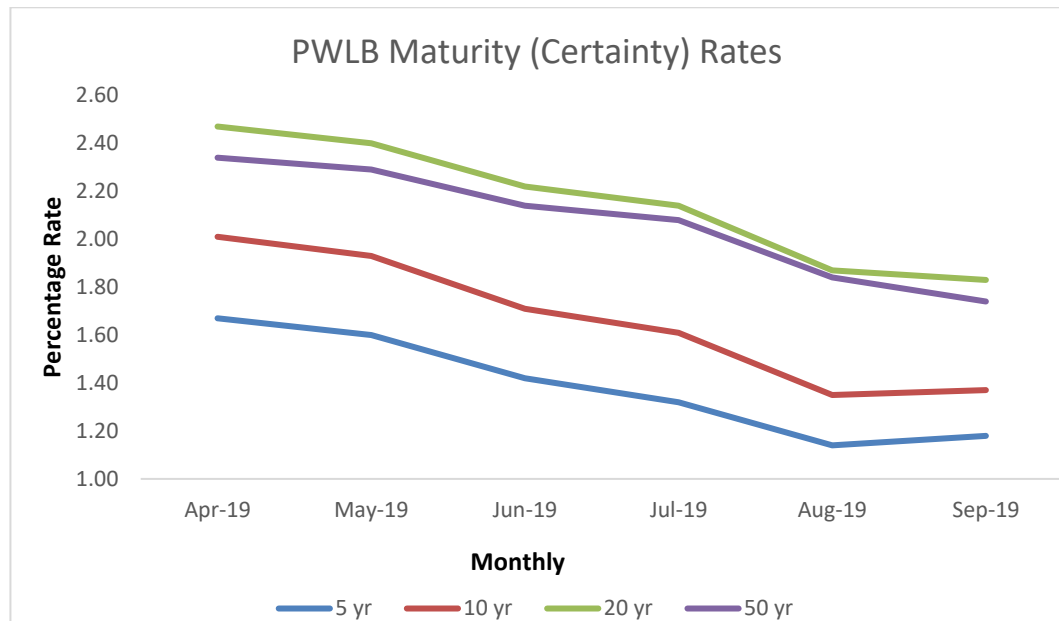
6.5 In line with the above strategy, this Council has not borrowed in advance of need during the first 6 months of the year and has no current intention to borrow in advance during the remainder of 2019/20.

6.6 No variance is currently being projected for net capital charges, as at 30th September 2019, which have a budget for 2019/20 of £18.9m. This is being achieved despite the challenges faced with investment income and maintaining our low risk strategy.

7.0 CERTAINTY RATE

7.1 The "certainty rate", whereby local authorities are able to access borrowing at 0.2% below published PWLB rates was available from HM Treasury again for this year. Authorities were required to provide an indication of their potential borrowing requirements for the next 3 years. This Council provided such information to HM Treasury and will continue to be able to access the discounted rate up to 31st October 2020.

8.0 ESTIMATED AND ACTUAL TREASURY POSITION AND PRUDENTIAL AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT INDICATORS

8.1 During the six months to 30th September 2019, the Council operated within its prudential limits set out in the Prudential Code report approved by Council in March 2019. Details of limits and actual performance are as follows:

8.2   Capital Expenditure and the Capital Financing Requirement

8.2.1   The Capital Expenditure plans of the Council are primarily financed by capital receipts and capital grants. The remaining element which cannot be immediately financed from other resources will constitute our borrowing requirement. The estimated level of available capital resources is provided in summary as the Capital Expenditure Indicator below.

Indicator: Capital Expenditure

	2019/20 Original Estimate £M	2019/20 Projected Outturn £M	2020/21 Revised Estimate £M	2021/22 Revised Estimate £M
Supported spend	81.643	112.404	37.727	19.522
Unsupported spend	37.047	39.822	11.807	2.756
Total spend	118.690	152.226	49.534	22.278
Financed by:-				
Borrowing	43.953	46.728	18.713	9.662
Other Capital Resources (Grants, Capital Receipts)	74.737	105.498	30.821	12.616

8.2.2   The Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) represents the Council's underlying need to borrow for capital purposes. The CFR is capital expenditure that has not yet been paid for from either revenue or capital resources.

8.2.3   The Council's expectation for the CFR for the next three years is shown below.

Indicator: Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)

	2019/20 31/03/20 Original Estimate £M	31/03/20 Projected Outturn £M	2020/21 31/03/21 Revised Estimate £M	2021/22 31/03/22 Revised Estimate £M
CFR	505.600	503.721	508.704	504.042
Net movement in CFR			4.983	(4.662)

8.2.4 The expected external debt for each year is as detailed below.

Indicator: External Debt

	30/09/19 Actuals £M	2019/20 31/03/20 Original Estimate £M	2019/20 31/03/20 Revised Estimate £M	2020/21 31/03/21 Revised Estimate £M	2021/22 31/03/22 Revised Estimate £M
Borrowing	357.854	378.447	374.645	424.193	463.707
Other long term liabilities	0.457	0.584	0.584	0.583	0.583
Total External Debt	358.311	379.031	375.229	424.776	464.290

8.2.5 Other Long Term Liabilities represents the Council's obligation under its finance leases.

9.0 <u>LIMITS TO BORROWING ACTIVITY</u>

9.1 The first key control over the Council's activity is to ensure that, over the medium term, borrowing will only be for a capital purpose. The Council needs to ensure that external borrowing does not exceed the total of the capital financing requirement in the preceding year plus the estimate of the additional capital financing requirement for the next three financial years. This allows some flexibility within a three-year period to deliver an effective Treasury Management strategy.

Borrowing Activity (Gross Borrowing)

	30/09/19 Actuals £M	2019/20 31/03/20 Original Estimate £M	2019/20 31/03/20 Revised Estimate £M	2020/21 31/03/21 Revised Estimate £M	2021/22 31/03/22 Revised Estimate £M
Gross Borrowing (inc. Other Long Term Liabilities)	358.311	379.031	375.229	424.776	464.290
Capital Financing Requirement		505.600	503.721	508.704	504.042

9.2 The Authorised Limit represents the limit beyond which borrowing is <u>prohibited</u>, and needs to be set, monitored and revised by Members. It reflects the maximum level of borrowing to fund existing capital commitments, which could be afforded in the short term, but is <u>not</u> sustainable. It is the expected maximum borrowing need, with some added headroom for unexpected movements. It is proposed that these limits be

amended in line with increases to the underlying need to borrow, that is, the Capital Financing Requirement.

Indicator: The Authorised Limit

	2019/20 30/09/19 Actuals £M	2019/20 Limit £M	2020/21 Limit £M	2021/22 Limit £M
Gross Borrowing	357.854	510.000	510.000	510.000
Other long term liabilities	0.457	2.000	2.000	2.000
Authorised Limit	358.311	512.000	512.000	512.000

9.3 The Operational Boundary is based on the probable external debt during the course of the year; actual borrowing could vary around this boundary, for short times, during the year. It should act as an indicator to ensure the Authorised Limit is not breached.

Indicator: The Operational Boundary

	2019/20 30/09/19 Actuals £M	2019/20 Estimate £M	2020/21 Estimate £M	2021/22 Estimate £M
Gross Borrowing Limit	357.854	380.000	425.000	460.000
Other long term liabilities	0.457	1.000	1.000	1.000
Operational Boundary	358.311	381.000	426.000	461.000

10.0 AFFORDABILITY PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

10.1 Previous sections have covered overall capital and control of borrowing indicators, but there is also a requirement to assess the affordability of capital investment plans. This provides an indication of the impact of the capital investment plans on the overall Council finances.

10.2 The Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream identifies the trend in the cost of capital (borrowing costs net of interest and investment income) against the "net revenue stream". The net revenue stream for the General Fund is the amount collectable from Council Tax payers added to the Council's Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Non Domestic Rates (NDR). The key use of this indicator is to compare trends in the ratio of financing costs to the net revenue stream, over time.

Indicator: Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

	2019/20 Original Estimate	2019/20 Revised Estimate	2020/21 Revised Estimate	2021/22 Revised Estimate
General Fund	4.86%	4.95%	5.38%	5.57%

10.3 A LOBO is a financial instrument called a "Lender's Option Borrower's Option". It provides a lower rate of interest for the initial period and a higher rate for the rest of its term (reversionary period), albeit that the higher rate was comparable with interest rates prevailing at the time the loans were taken. At the end of the initial period and at six monthly intervals, the lender has the option to increase the interest rate payable. This provides the Council with the option to repay the loan if the terms are not acceptable. It is the view of our Treasury Management Advisors that it is unlikely the LOBO's will be called within this financial year.

10.4 The revised amount of LOBO debt held in 2019/20 is £31m, 9%. Although not a requirement of the Prudential Code, an internal limit of LOBO debt is set as follows:

	£M	% of Debt Portfolio
LOBO Limits	50	20

10.5 The maturity structure indicator sets gross limits to reduce the Council's exposure to large fixed rate sums falling due for refinancing annually. The Code of Practice requires LOBO's to be represented in the maturity structure at the next option date, hence the table below demonstrates a high maturity within 12 months.

Indicator: Maturity Structure

	2019/20 Actuals as at 30/09/19	Upper Limit	Lower Limit
Under 12 months	13%	70%	0%
12 months to 2 years	3%	70%	0%
2 years to 5 years	10%	60%	0%
5 years to 10 years	17%	70%	0%
10 years to 20 years	8%	90%	0%
20 years to 30 years	0%	90%	0%
30 years to 40 years	49%	90%	0%
40 years to 50 years	0%	90%	0%

10.6 In order to maximise investment returns there could be opportunities for sums to be invested for longer than one year. This would only be undertaken with a prudent view of the primary considerations of security and liquidity.

11.0 NON SPECIFIED INVESTMENTS

11.1 The Investment Strategy enables lending to organisations upon which we undertake appropriate due diligence and put in place appropriate security arrangements. Such loans could result in the Council being able to achieve better investment returns at an acceptable level of risk and to secure base budget savings over the short to medium term to protect frontline services whilst supporting initiatives for purposes relevant to Council functions and priorities.

11.2 Investment decisions in these "Non Specified Investments" are subject to S151 officer determination, following appropriate due diligence and subject to appropriate and acceptable security arrangements being in place as part of the commercial agreement.

11.3 The maximum exposure for this type of investment is set at £25M with a maximum maturity limit of 30 years.

11.4 Such transactions will be included in the indicators reported as part of the quarterly performance reports and statutory Treasury Management Reports.

Indicator: Total principal funds invested for periods longer than 1 year:

	Limit	31/03/20 Estimate
Maximum principal sums invested over 1 year	£25m	£4.5m

11.5 The £4.5m represents the Council's commercially agreed 10-year loan to Trivallis.

11.6 For measuring the Council's exposure to interest rate risk, the following table shows the revenue impact of a 1% rise or fall in interest rates (based on borrowing and investments as at 30th September 2019):

Interest Rate Risk	Impact £M
One year revenue impact of a 1% rise/fall in interest rates	0.128

12.0 INVESTMENT STRATEGY, ACTIVITY & RESULTS

12.1 The Council manages its investments in-house, investing in line with the Council's approved lender criteria as approved by Council on the 27th March 2019.

12.2 Members will recall that following the onset of the unprecedented national and international economic crisis in 2008, all of this Council's cash flows are currently being invested in the Debt Management Account Deposit Facility and other Government backed public sector bodies, in line with the aforementioned approved strategy. This strategy ensures we prioritise **S**ecurity (protecting monies invested), then **L**iquidity (cashflow) and finally **Y**ield (return on investment). The order of these "SLY" priorities are detailed in Investment Guidance produced by the Welsh Government.

12.3 I have kept this under constant review subsequently with a view to returning to market investment activity at an appropriate time. To date, the Council has not returned to market investments. Members will be kept informed of any changes as part of the Council's quarterly performance reports.

12.4 The following table shows the overall result of the investment activities undertaken by the Council:

	Interest Received £M	Average Cash Balance £M	Return on Investments %	Benchmark Return %
General Balances	0.96	16.91	0.57	0.53

The benchmark for Local Authority internally managed funds is the average 7-day LIBID rate.

13.0 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ADVISORS

13.1 The Council appointed Arlingclose as its Treasury Management Advisors during March 2019 and they continue to support the Council's Treasury Management function.

14.0 TRAINING

14.1 Officers have attended events hosted by Arlingclose which provide an overview of the economic environment, investment and borrowing, treasury management related accounting changes and associated implications for the Council. In addition, strategy meetings have been held between Arlingclose and officers in July and September this year. Officers continue to receive interest rate information, economic data, credit ratings and general market environment information on a regular basis.

15.0 MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION (MRP)

15.1 In accordance with legislative requirements applicable to local government (Local Government Act 2003), there is a requirement to charge an amount to revenue each year in respect of capital expenditure that is funded by

borrowing. This charge is known as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) and must be a prudent amount in accordance with Welsh Government Statutory Guidance.

15.2 The method of charging MRP for Supported Borrowing is a straight line policy over 40 years. With regard to finance leases MRP is equivalent to the principal value of repayments. With regard to the method of charging MRP to Council Fund Balances in respect of Unsupported Borrowing only, the method used is dependent upon the type of asset being created as set out in the approved MRP Policy statement approved by Council on the 27th March 2019.

16.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

16.1 The report provides an overview of the Council's Treasury Management activities during the first six months of 2019/20 in line with the Treasury Management and Capital Strategies approved by Council in March 2019. As a result, no Equality Impact Assessment is required for the purposes of this report.

17.0 CONSULTATION

17.1 Following consideration by Council, this report will be presented to the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee in line with the laid down code of practice "CIPFA Treasury management in the Public Services 2017" and also the Terms of Reference for this Committee.

18.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

18.1 The financial results / implications of the Council's Treasury Management arrangements during the first six months of 2019/20 have been incorporated into quarterly Performance Reports during the year.

19.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS *OR* LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

19.1 The report ensures the Council complies with its legal duty under the Local Government Act 2003 and in doing so is in line with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

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

20.1 This report evidences the progress made in delivering the Council's Corporate Plan – '*The Way Ahead'* in particular through supporting the

'Living Within Our Means' theme by pursuing optimum treasury management performance or return at the same time as managing associated risk.

20.2 The report also supports the Well-being of Future Generations Act in particular 'a globally responsible Wales' through responsible management and investment of the Council's resources.

21.0 **<u>CONCLUSION</u>**

21.1 The 2019/20 financial year continues to be a challenging year for Treasury Management and this report highlights for Members the Treasury Management activities that have been undertaken between April and September 2019.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY STATEMENT

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council defines the policies and objectives of its treasury management activities as:

- The management of the organisation's borrowing, investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.

- This Authority regards the successful identification, monitoring and control of risk to be the prime criteria by which the effectiveness of its treasury management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on their risk implications for the Authority, and any financial instruments entered into to manage these risks.

- This Authority acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principles of achieving value for money in treasury management, and to employing suitable comprehensive performance measurement techniques, within the context of effective risk management.

ADOPTION OF TREASURY MANAGEMENT CLAUSES

- This Authority will create and maintain, as the cornerstones for effective treasury management:

  o a Treasury Management Policy Statement, stating the policies, objectives and approach to risk management of its treasury management activities; and

  o suitable treasury management practices (TMPs), setting out the manner in which it will seek to achieve those policies and objectives, and prescribing how it will manage and control those activities.

- This Authority will receive reports on its treasury management policies, practices and activities, including, as a minimum, an annual strategy and plan in advance of the year, a mid-year review and an annual report after its close, in the form prescribed in its TMPs.

- This Authority delegates responsibility for the implementation and regular monitoring of its treasury management policies and practices to Council, and

for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions to the Director of Finance and Digital Services, who will act in accordance with the organisation's policy statement and TMPs and, if he/she is a CIPFA member, CIPFA's Standard of Professional Practice on Treasury Management.

- This Authority nominates the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee to be responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the treasury management strategy and policies.

Other information:
Relevant Scrutiny Committee – Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL 27TH NOVEMBER 2019

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES

Item: 2019/20 MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT STEWARDSHIP REPORT

Background Papers

- 27th March 2019 Council meeting – Reports:
  - Treasury Management Strategy Incorporating Investment Strategy, Treasury Management Indicators and MRP Statement for 2019/20.
  - 2019/20 Capital Strategy Report Incorporating Prudential Indicators.

These reports were also presented to the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 2nd April 2019.

Officer to contact: Barrie Davies (Director of Finance and Digital Services)

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Budget Consultation 2020/21 (Phase 1)

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

January 2020

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FIGURES AND TABLES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This section provides a summary of the main findings from the Phase 1 Budget Consultation 2020/21.

- The consultation was conducted in-house. The consultation period ran from the 21st November and ended on the 16th December 2019.

- The following methods were used to consult with stakeholders;
    - An online questionnaire
    - A number of Town Centre, Leisure Centre and Library events
    - Promotion through Social media
    - Questions/polls on social media
    - Youth Forum
    - Older Persons Advisory Group Meeting
    - Disability Forum Meeting
    - Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee
    - Promotion with the Citizen's Panel
    - An email sent to key stakeholders, including Community and Town Councils, Trade Unions, Councillors, Local AM's and MPs

- The results of the budget questionnaire (305 responses) showed that the majority of respondents felt that the Council should protect services at their current level, through a 3% increase in Council Tax (80.8%).

- The majority of respondents (60.9%) would prefer a 3% increase in Council Tax (the current proposed level), with 24.2% stating less than 3% and 11.1% suggesting more than a 3% increase.

- 78% of respondents agreed that the Council should provide sufficient resources to fully cover increased pay costs in our schools.

- Respondents were asked to state which services they would want to protect from an increase in fees and charges in 2020/21, based on the assumption that they would be increased by 1.5% (i.e. the Consumer Price Index (CPI)). The majority of respondents felt that the fees and charges for the following services should be frozen (no increase);
    - Meals on Wheels (53.9%);
    - Bereavement Fees (53.5%);
    - School Meals (53.2%); and
    - Adult Social Care Charges (51.2%).

    Those services where the majority of respondents suggested an increase of 1.5% (CPI level) were;
    - Leisure Centre Pay and Play (55.4%);
    - Leisure Centre Membership (53.9%); and
    - Cinema (entrance fee) (51.9%).

3

- Respondents were provided with a list of Council services and asked to choose which services should be protected and prioritised for any additional resources in 2020/21. Respondents fed back that the majority of services listed be prioritised and protected with the exception of;

    - Music Service (63.5% do not protect); and
    - Cultural, Tourism and Heritage Services (57.7% do not protect).

- The top 5 services that respondents wanted to protect and prioritise were;
    - Children's Social Care Services (93.8%);
    - Schools (90%);
    - Adult Social Care Services (86.9%);
    - Highways, Transport and Street Care Services (81.9%); and
    - Waste and Recycling Services (78.1%).

- Respondents were provided with the following statement and asked whether they thought this was a good strategy.

    Each year in balancing our budget and ensuring the effective use of resources, all our service managers are required to contribute toward a council-wide efficiency (savings) target of £6M. This means that all of our services are becoming more efficient, without impacting on front line services.

    The majority of respondents thought that this was a good strategy (90.6%) and 91.8% said that we should continue to expect our managers to deliver more efficient services.

- Respondents were asked if they thought the Council should focus on a number of key areas. The majority of respondents agreed with all of the key areas, with the highest response being for Early Intervention and Prevention (88.9%).

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't know (%)
Digitalisation	79.2	13.0	7.8
Commercialisation	72.6	17.8	9.6
Early Intervention and Prevention	88.9	5.7	5.4
Independence	80.8	12.0	7.2
Efficient and Effective Organisation	85.0	7.8	7.2

- Respondents were asked if they thought the Council should invest in a number of service areas. The majority of respondents agreed that the Council should invest in all of the areas listed, with the most support for Extra Care/Community Hubs (83.9%) followed by Roads & Transport (80.3%).

- Respondents were provided with the following statement and asked whether they thought the Council should continue with such a strategy.

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For a number of years the Council has used one off reserves (£1.1M for 2019/20) to balance its budget alongside delivering savings early in subsequent years to replace these reserves. It does so as part of a medium term financial strategy recognising that managing and balancing our budget is not a one off annual process

The majority of respondents (81.1%) fed back that the Council should continue with this strategy.

- At the public engagement events respondents were provided with a number of Council investment opportunities and asked to choose their top priorities, using "RCT money". There were 11 investment boxes to choose from and people were given £1000 (1x £500, 1x £300, 1x £150 and 1x £50) and then asked to distribute the money. The following table shows the results of the engagement exercise;

Investment opportunities	Total
Extra Care & Community Hubs	£35,900
21st Century Schools	£29,150
Roads & Transport	£23,950
Employment	£22,750
Recycling & Environment	£20,900
Play Areas	£20,800
Towns & Regeneration	£17,700
Empty Properties	£13,200
Leisure	£9,500
Events & Arts	£6,200
Flood Alleviation	£5,800
Other	£4,700

- An engagement session was held with members of the OPAG (Older Persons Advisory Group). The general consensus from members of the group was to increase Council Tax and protect services. Comments are found in 5.6 - 5.11 of the report.

- An engagement session was held with the Rhondda Cynon Taf Disability Forum. Comments are found in section 5.13 - 5.17 of the report.

- The Council's Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee were consulted with (the minutes of which have not been included in this report) and a link to the consultation was circulated to all members of the School Budget Forum.

- An engagement event was held in Aberdare with young people from the youth forums in RCT. Comments are found in section 6 of the report.

- 3,966 people were engaged in the phase 1 budget consultation.

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   This report presents the findings of the Phase 1 Budget Consultation 2020/21.

1.2   Section 2 outlines some brief background to the consultation process.

1.3   Section 3 details the methodology.

1.4   Section 4 provides the results of the online questionnaire.

1.5   Section 5 presents the feedback received at the engagement road show events, the Older Persons Advisory Group and Disability Forum meeting.

1.6   Section 6 provides feedback on the young persons' engagement events.

1.7   Section 7 provides the results of Social Media polls and some comments.

2.   BACKGROUND

2.1   The Council undertakes a comprehensive approach to its annual budget consultation, involving a large number of residents and key stakeholders.

2.2   The widespread approach we use and the range of views we capture provides senior managers and Cabinet Members with the necessary information they need to set the budget for the year ahead. In addition, we have found that the vast amount of information we collect can also be valuable for service managers to use for their service planning and development.

2.3   Following the announcement of the General Election, the Welsh Government budget settlement to Local Government for the 2020/21 financial year was delayed. As a result Rhondda Cynon Taf's 2020/21 Budget Consultation is a phased approach, so that we can ensure residents and stakeholders have as much opportunity as possible to provide views on the budget and to make sure that views are informed by the most up to date and relevant information**.**

2.4   This report presents the findings of phase 1 of the budget consultation, where views were sought on;

- level of Council Tax increase;

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- the resources allocated to our schools;
- fees and charges levels;
- protection and prioritisation of services for additional resources;
- delivering more efficient services;
- Council priorities, investment opportunities and Council reserves; and
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

2.5   Phase 1 started on the 21st November and ended on the 16th December 2019.

2.6   Phase 2 of the consultation will commence in January 2020 and will seek to obtain views on the proposed Budget Strategy for 2020/21.

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3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Phase 1 of the Council's budget consultation ran from 21st November to the 16th December 2019.

3.2 The following methods were used to consult with stakeholders;

- An online questionnaire.
- A number of Town Centre, Leisure Centre and Library events.
- Promotion through Social media.
- Questions/polls on social media.
- Youth Forum.
- Older Persons Advisory Group Meeting.
- Disability Forum Meeting.
- Promotion with the Citizen's Panel.
- An email was sent to key stakeholders, including Community and Town Councils, Trade Unions, Councillors, Local AM's and MPs.

3.3 The following engagement events took place during the consultation;

Tuesday 26th November	Pontypridd Library
Tuesday 26th November	Llantrisant Leisure Centre
Wednesday 27th November	Porth Library
Thursday 28th November	Ferndale Hub
Thursday 28th November	Sobell Leisure Centre
Wednesday 4th December	Treorchy Co-op (with Recycling Team)
Wednesday 4th December	Rhondda Sports Centre
Thursday 5th December	Abercynon Library
Friday 6th December	Aberdare town centre (with recycling team)
Monday 9th December	Porth Morrisons
Monday 9th December	Sobell Leisure Centre
Tuesday 10th December	Hirwaun Library
Wednesday 11th December	Pontypridd town centre (with recycling team)
Thursday 12th December	Llantrisant Leisure Centre
Friday 13th December	Mountain Ash Hub

3.4 At the events, members of the public were invited to have a discussion with Officers and Councillors about the Council's budget, investments and any problems or queries they may have had. A number of budget boxes were used and "RCT money" was used to allow people to choose their investment priorities. Comments and ideas were also noted for this report.

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3.5 The Council's Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee were consulted with (the minutes of which have not been included in this report) and a link to the consultation was circulated to all members of the School Budget Forum.

3.6 3,966 people were engaged in the phase 1 budget consultation.

4 Questionnaire Results

4.1 The following section outlines the results from the budget questionnaire, which received 305 online responses. A selection of comments are provided and the full list of comments will be provided to Cabinet and senior officers to assist with decision making.

Council Tax

4.2 The majority of respondents felt that the Council should protect services at their current level through a 3% increase (80.8%).

Table 1: Council Tax preference

	%
Do you think the Council should……	
Protect Council services at their current level through a 3% increase in Council Tax	80.8%
Reduce service levels to close any budget gap and keep any increase in Council Tax to a minimum	19.2%

A selection of comments can be found below;

Agree to maintain services and increase Council Tax

"A 3% increase is still quite low and is preferable to service closures"

"modest increases above 3% in line with neighbouring authorities would be justifiable to maintain and stabilise existing service levels"

"As a council tax payer I would happily accept an increase if it means that the Council can continue with the services it provides"

"no more than 3% or 4%"

"If a 3% increase enabled services to maintain current level of delivery then I would welcome this"

No increase in Council Tax

"A 3% increase means a tangible loss to my disposable income"

"Council tax is too high already"

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"The Council tax can't keep going up, it's like another mortgage, people are struggling as it is".

Neither option

"protect services, but no council tax increase"

"neither, it may only be 3% but we are already one of the highest"

"neither, already paying too much for a reduced service, a reduction of council tax is needed"

"Neither, too many services have already been cut"

Other

"Government needs to fund services better"

"services cannot be cut further, health education and social care are at breaking point already"

4.3   Respondents were also asked what their preferred level of Council Tax increase for next year would be. The results show that the majority of respondents (60.9%) would prefer a 3% increase (the current proposed level), 24.2% stating less than 3%, 11.1% suggesting an increase of more than 3% and 3.8% indicating more than 5%.
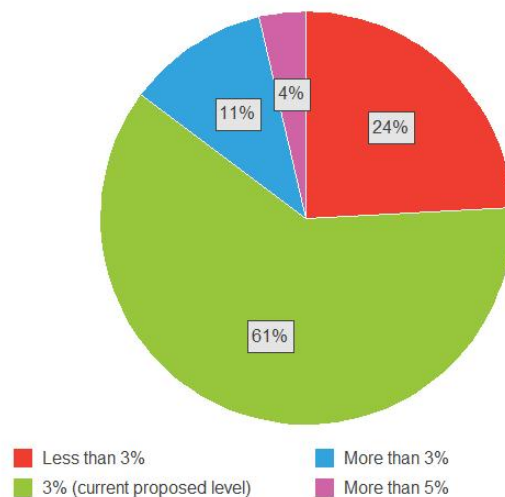

Pie chart segments:
- 24% (red)
- 61% (green)
- 11% (blue)
- 4% (magenta)

Legend:
- Less than 3%
- 3% (current proposed level)
- More than 3%
- More than 5%

Figure 1 - Preferred level of Council Tax increase

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Schools Budget

4.4   78% of respondents agreed that the Council should provide sufficient resources to fully cover increased pay costs in our schools.
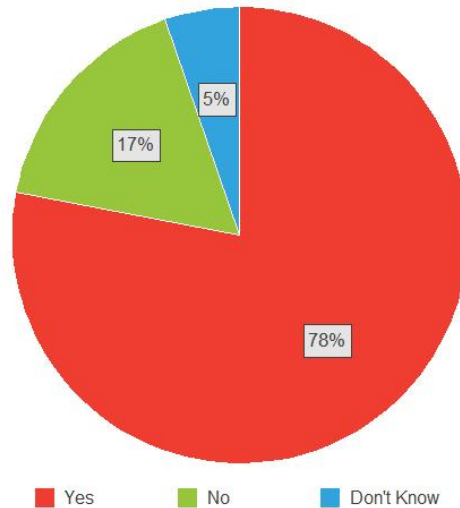

Figure 2 - Agreement with Schools Budget increase

Fees and Charges

4.5   Respondents were asked to state which services they would want to protect from an increase in fees and charges in 2020/21, based on the assumption that they would be increased by 1.5% (i.e. the Consumer Price Index (CPI)).

Table 2: Areas to protect from increase

Analysis % Respondents	Total	CPI (increase (1.5%)	Higher than CPI (higher than 1.5% increase)	Freeze (no increase)
School meals	**301**	37.9%	9.0%	53.1%
Leisure Centre Membership	**297**	53.8%	19.9%	26.3%
Leisure Centre Pay and Play	**296**	55.4%	20.6%	24.0%
Summer and Winter Playing Fees (Sports Clubs)	**297**	43.8%	16.8%	39.4%
Parking Charges	**298**	35.9%	15.8%	48.3%

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Cinema (entrance fee)	**297**	51.9%	24.9%	23.2%
Pontypridd Lido (entry for adult users)	**298**	47.3%	37.9%	14.8%
Meals on Wheels	**297**	31.3%	14.8%	53.9%
Adult Social Care Charges (non-residential care services)	**299**	41.1%	7.7%	51.2%
Bereavement Fees	**299**	38.1%	8.4%	53.5%

4.6 The table shows that the majority (i.e. 50% or more) of respondents felt that fees and charges for the following services should be frozen (no increase);

- Meals on Wheels (53.9%);
- Bereavement Fees (53.5%);
- School Meals (53.2%); and
- Adult Social Care Charges (51.2%).

Those services with a majority suggesting an increase at 1.5% (i.e. the CPI level) were;

- Leisure Centre Pay and Play (55.4%);
- Leisure Centre Membership (53.9%); and
- Cinema (entrance fee) (51.9%).

It is worth noting that 37.9% of respondents suggested an increase higher than the CPI of 1.5% for the Pontypridd Lido, with only 14.8% suggesting a freeze.

4.7 A selection of comments are provided below;

Overall

"If you freeze some and increase others by more than 1.5%, you are penalising some areas. Increases across the board would seem fairer…."

"some of the above [list of fees] are considered a luxury for low income families, they would not want to pay for those additional, so I recommend that they are increased and costs reduced for essential services"

"Increase costs for those that choose to use facilities…. Services that are non-choice e.g. Bereavement services, should be frozen"

"Where things are essential then CPI seems reasonable, where extras then why not pay more".

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School Meals

"working parents in the Rhondda have been struggling it is important that children get a decent meal"

"school meals might be defined as a social service and therefore more essential than purely entertainment functions"

"school meals are often the only meal"

Leisure

".… Services like leisure memberships have room to increase in price while still competitive with big chains"

"start raising fees on leisure and cinemas, which lets face it are a luxury…."

Parking Charges

"increasing parking charges will further reduce footfall to local towns and businesses…"

Cinema

"If cinema fees were to increase then the cost would be much higher than commercial competitors within the area…"

Pontypridd Lido

"entrance fees for Lido are too low"

"…I would not mind an increase in the current adult fees, as the Lido provides such a vast and dynamic swimming and leisure experience".

Adult Social Care Charges

"social care fees should be kept as low as possible, since they apply to the most vulnerable of our residents"

"I believe no further increases for vulnerable elderly adults"

Bereavement Fees

"Funeral poverty is resulting in a drain in local Authority purse as more families decline to make arrangements for loved ones…."

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<u>Other</u>

"Fees directly involving children and their wellbeing should remain frozen…"

<u>Council Services</u>

4.8   Respondents were provided with a list of Council services and asked to choose which services should be protected and prioritised for any additional resources in 2020/21 and those that should not be protected.

Table 3: Council services to be protected and prioritised

	Protect and Prioritise	Do Not Protect
Schools (Current budget £153M)	90.0%	10.0%
School Support Services (£16M)	71.1%	28.9%
Libraries and Adult Learning (£3M)	53.0%	47.0%
Apprenticeship Scheme (£0.2M)	71.5%	28.5%
Youth Provision (£2M)	73.7%	26.3%
Access, Engagement & Inclusion (£10M)	51.8%	48.2%
Adult Social Care Services (£89M)	86.9%	13.1%
Children's Social Care Services (£46M)	93.8%	6.2%
Public Health (£5M)	70.4%	29.6%
Housing (£1M)	62.0%	38.0%
Parks (£5M)	61.2%	38.8%
Highways, Transport and Street care Services (£28M)	81.9%	18.1%
Waste and Recycling Services (£18M)	78.1%	21.9%
Cultural, Tourism and Heritage Services (£2M)	42.3%	57.7%
Regeneration (£1.5M)	59.7%	40.3%
Leisure Services (£4M)	51.1%	48.9%
Music Service (£0.1M)	36.5%	63.5%

4.9   The majority of services listed were asked to be prioritised and protected with the exception of;

- Music Service (63.5% do not protect); and
- Cultural, Tourism and Heritage Services (57.7% do not protect).

4.10   The top 5 services that respondents wanted to protect and prioritise were;

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- Children's Social Care Services (93.8%);
- Schools (90%);
- Adult Social Care Services (86.9%);
- Highways, Transport and Street care Services (81.9%); and
- Waste and Recycling Services (78.1%).

Efficiencies

4.11   Respondents were provided with the following statement and asked whether they thought this was a good strategy.

Each year in balancing our budget and ensuring the effective use of resources, all our service managers are required to contribute toward a council-wide efficiency (savings) target of £6M. This means that all of our services are becoming more efficient, without impacting on front line services.

The majority of respondents thought this was a good strategy (90.6%) and 91.8% said that we should continue to expect our managers to deliver more efficient services.

4.12   The word cloud/map below provides a simple illustrated snapshot of some of the main efficiency saving comments received.
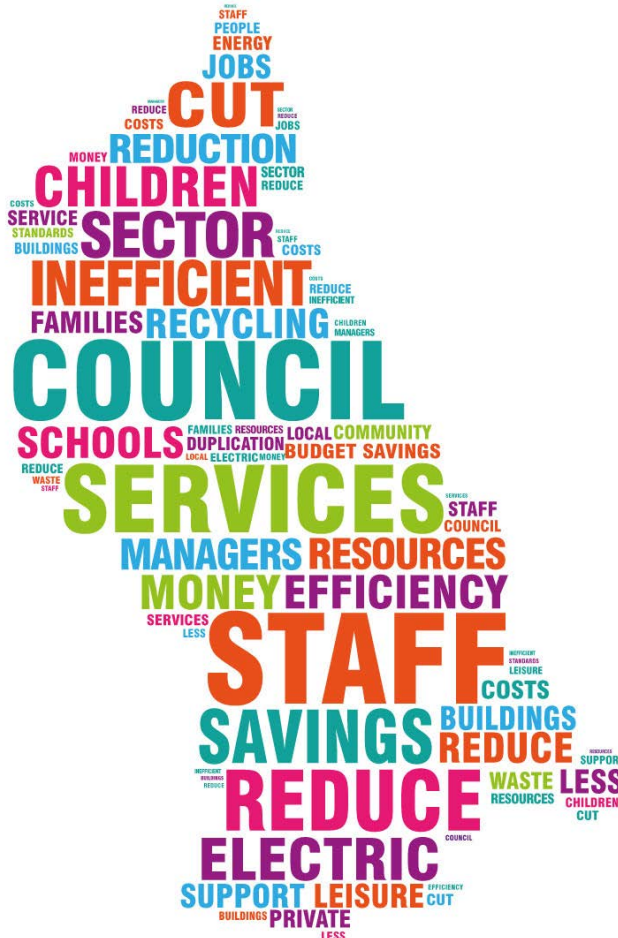

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Figure 3 – Efficiency comments

4.13   The following comments provide some of the examples of how respondents felt the Council could be more efficient;

Note: A large number of responses were received and will be available to Councillors and Officers as part of the reporting process.

Energy Efficiency

"should become more efficient in regards to where its electric comes from, save money long term…"

"I think that being eco-friendly needs to be a priority"

"maximise opportunities provided by Council's land and Buildings for local production of electricity and associated cost reduction and income generation"

Senior managers and Councillors

"too many managers and with too high salaries"

"too many high earners within the Council"

Buildings

""reduce number of council buildings"

"more energy efficient buildings"

"reduce the number of Council buildings across RCT"

"reduction in real estate"

Enforcement

"Actively fine residents for putting refuse out all weekend… fines for dog fouling"

Digitalisation/Agile working

"more agile work, less building and travel"

"better use of technology by staff and customers to provide the necessary services"

"offer home working ….which will cut down on office space dramatically"

"home working to reduce council offices"

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"do more online"

"increase mobile working and investment in technology to enable such scenarios"

Difficult for more Efficiency

"I think we've cut just about cut all we can in terms of frontline services"

"You can only become so efficient before you're just making cuts"

Income generation

"look at ways of increasing income"

"Income generation –advertising"

Other

"ask people to opt in for Welsh rather than sending all correspondence in dual languages"

"I would like to see the authority bid for more grant funding"

4.14   Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any other comments on the budget and the following is a selection of those received:

Efficiency

"You cannot expect a continuous reduction whether you want to call it sheer cuts or "making it more efficient"

"There is a limit to efficiency savings - too far and the service will become inefficient as there won't be enough staff to deliver any sort of service"

"Efficiency savings should only be made where they do not have a direct impact on front line services such as adult and child care, health and education"

"General efficiency savings are welcomed (so long as they focus on natural wastage rather than redundancies and closing down services)….."

Staff/Employment

"Job cuts in local authorities are not the way forward. We need to maintain an effective working local authority that we can all be proud of"

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"Offer homeworking/agile working to all members of staff, which will cut down office space dramatically."

"More opportunities should be given to more people leaving school and commencing full time employment. Such as more apprenticeship post and more graduate posts being created"

Social Care

"The council could release pressure on its social care budgets if they develop "Council social care apprenticeships" and create opportunities for young people to get a foothold onto employment or step-up to further education in social care, particularly those without good parental guidance or from poorer households that may not have any direction."

"More local access/services/support for Families/Children/Adults of all ages, with Long-Term health/wellbeing/learning Difficulties & Disabilities"

Schools

"I think that schools should be a priority for the Council."

"More money for schools and social care"

Positive

"Compared to other councils the services in RCT are fairly good

"It has been good to see investment made in areas such as Taff Vale even though Council budgets are reducing"

"The public events are helpful to understand things better"

"Generally, I think you do an amazing job trying to balance the books, protect vital services and keep everyone happy. My experience as a householder of recycling is excellent (RCT is way ahead of many English counties where we have friends)."

"Good to see the council managing the budget better than most"

Other

"More investment in regeneration projects"

"Lobby for more funding"

"investment into leisure and sport to ensure people can be active/healthy and accessible opportunities in leisure facilities and playing fields/3gs for clubs and community groups"

"Look at ways to generate more income"

"We need to look economic growth. Reignite the business club. Stimulate future business startup appetite in RCT in schools."

The Council's Priorities

4.15 The Council focuses on five key areas to maximise resources and deliver improved services.

- **Digitalisation** – taking the opportunity new technology provides to deliver better services for residents, visitors, businesses and how we operate internally
- **Commercialisation** – utilising our scale and expertise to deliver services for other organisations and customers and thereby generate income
- **Early Intervention and Prevention** – investing in preventative services to deliver savings in the medium term.
- **Independence** – reshaping our services for vulnerable residents to ensure that we promote independence and deliver first class care services.
- **Efficient and Effective Organisation** – challenging our ongoing service delivery and driving out further efficiencies through for example, a reduction in administration costs and reducing property costs linked to new ways of working, for example through agile working.

4.16 Respondents were asked if they thought the Council should focus on these key areas. As you can see in the table and figure below, the majority of respondents agreed with all of the key areas, with the highest response being for Early Intervention and Prevention (88.9%).

Table 4: Key areas of focus

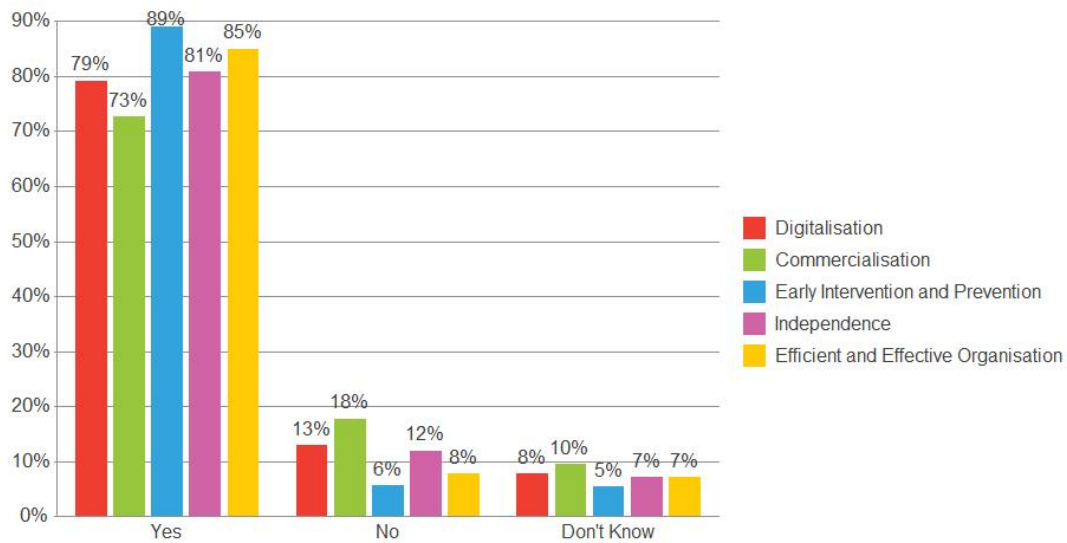|	Yes (%)	No (%)	DK (%)
Digitalisation	79.2	13.0	7.8
Commercialisation	72.6	17.8	9.6
Early Intervention and Prevention	88.9	5.7	5.4
Independence	80.8	12.0	7.2
Efficient and Effective Organisation	85.0	7.8	7.2

Figure 4 - Agreement with focus on 5 key areas

Council Investment Opportunities

4.17 Respondents were asked if they thought the Council should invest in a number of service areas. As you can see the majority of respondents agreed that the Council should invest in all of the areas suggested, with the most support for Extra Care/Community Hubs (83.9%), followed by Roads & Transport (80.3%).

Table 5: Areas of Investment

Analysis % Respondents	Yes	No	Don't Know
21st Century Schools (new and remodelled schools)	72.5%	18.0%	9.5%
Roads &Transport (repairs and resurfacing and major projects such as A4119 dualling, Llanharan bypass and Mountain Ash Cross Valley link	80.3%	15.2%	4.5%
Recycling & the Environment (improving recycling performance)	76.5%	19.7%	3.8%
Town Centres & Regeneration (improving the town centres eg. Llys Cadwyn, Pontypridd)	71.6%	22.9%	5.5%
Empty Properties (Grant to bring properties back into use)	76.0%	18.1%	5.9%
Leisure (improvements to facilities)	54.3%	36.4%	9.3%
Play Areas and Parks (upgrading the equipment and standard)	68.2%	25.4%	6.4%
Extra Care/Community Hubs (focus on independence for older people)	83.9%	10.6%	5.5%
Employment (apprenticeships and graduate placements)	74.4%	18.4%	7.2%
Events/Arts (investment in attractions and theatres)	47.9%	41.2%	10.9%

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Flood Alleviation (investing in flood prevention schemes)	70.2%	21.1%	8.7%

4.18 The word cloud/map below provides a simple illustrated snapshot of some of the main investment comments received.

Figure 5 – Investment comments

4.19 The following are a selection of comments received on the Council's investment areas;

21st Century Schools

"Remodelling of old school buildings is necessary but I don't believe the formation of large through schools will benefit the pupils living in areas of deprivation."

"The school building is not important it is the level of teaching that matters."

Roads & Transport

"Transport, there needs to be planning for cycle paths in every new road project. It is ridiculous to improve roads without adding safe cycle routes"

"Given the need to get more private cars off the roads the transport expenditure should be focussed on improving public transport, particularly in the evenings and at weekends (including public holidays)"

Recycling & the Environment

"I think we are doing enough at present in regards to recycling in RCT and continue at this level without an increase in investment"

"Look at circular economy for waste management. Is there anything you can reclaim and resell?"

"Must invest in areas of council activity which support climate change adaptation and Net Zero commitments"

Town Centres & Regeneration

"Town centres have become a thing of the past, everything is done online and I feel no matter what is done, numbers will not rise to a significant level to justify money being used"

"Regeneration on towns on a need basis. Get in get each town clean tidy and nice to visit."

Empty Properties

"Tackling empty buildings needs to be considered"

"Maybe incentives for empty shops and 'start up' businesses"

Leisure

"playing field improvements and 3g usage over weekends"

"Green playing fields and changing facilities must meet minimum standards to help community groups promote leisure activities"

Extra Care/Community Hubs

"Extra Care/community Hubs - shouldn't be focused on just, independence for older people (ONLY) *It should be Independence for ALL AGES*"

<u>Employment</u>

"More jobs need creating in the valleys so that so many people don't need to be leaving to go out of the valleys on a daily basis, causing endless traffic and air pollution"

"more apprenticeships and work experience opportunities"

"Small business and start up grant provision would be good"

<u>Events/Arts</u>

"Leisure Arts investment should be tied to ability to generate income - people expect a certain standard of provision and may pay more if this standard is exceeded."

<u>Flood Alleviation</u>

"If flood prevention was more prominent would likely save in long term against home/business owners claiming due to damages etc."

"With regards to flood alleviation ... more emphasis should be put on house building companies to contribute more to such schemes."

<u>Other</u>

"Good to see so much investment in RCT"

"I consider those chosen are necessities which should be prioritised for investment first given the financial difficulties."

"Would like to see more money in youth services"

Council Reserves

4.20   Respondents were provided with the following statement and asked if they thought that the Council should continue with such a strategy.

For a number of years the Council has used one off reserves (£1.1M for 2019/20) to balance its budget alongside delivering savings early in subsequent years to replace these reserves. It does so as part of a medium term financial strategy recognising that managing and balancing our budget is not a one off annual process

The majority of respondents (81.1%) think the Council should continue with this strategy.

5. ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

5.1 This section outlines the results of the face to face consultation discussions held in the town centres, leisure centres and libraries along with feedback received from the older person's advisory group (OPAG) and Disability Forum meetings.

5.2 A large number of engagement events were held across Rhondda Cynon Taf, the details of which are provided in the methodology.

5.3 The engagement events and meetings form part of the Council's ongoing approach to face to face resident engagement.

Council Investment Areas

5.4 Respondents were provided with a number of Council investment opportunities and asked to choose their top priorities, using "RCT money". There were 11 investment boxes to choose from and people were given £1000 (1x £500, 1x £300, 1x £150 and 1x £50) and then asked to distribute the money.

5.5 The following table shows the results of the engagement exercise;

Table 6: Engagement exercise priorities

Investment opportunities	Total
Extra Care & Community Hubs	£35,900
21st Century Schools	£29,150
Roads & Transport	£23,950
Employment	£22,750
Recycling & Environment	£20,900
Play Areas	£20,800
Towns & Regeneration	£17,700
Empty Properties	£13,200
Leisure	£9,500
Events & Arts	£6,200
Flood Alleviation	£5,800
Other	£4,700

A selection of the comments received are shown below;

21<u>st</u> Century Schools

"Schools is most important to me"

"Schools always need money."

"Schools / education is really important."

Roads & Transport

"Roads & Transport - there are a lot more cars on the road now."

"Roads and transport box should be divided into roads and another. Public transport to improve roads need to get people to use public transport."

"Roads need investment, topography, weather affects roads, bring them up to standard"

"Roads always need improving"

Recycling & the Environment

"Recycling & Environment - Pontyclun pretty lucky around here - good recycling / rubbish"

"Recycling - Llantwit Fardre - opening times restricted not helpful went to pick up recycling bags and closed in day"

"Recycling - environmental needs to be a separate box, climate change affects everything"

"Recycling is important to us - hope this touches on flooding and investment would improve this."

"Recycling is good here!"

"Pretty good recycling"

"Dog mess is a big issue in lane by my house I report it to Council and they are good at responding"

"Invest much more in protecting the environment and educating the people how to do so. Focus on - recycling, reducing carbon footprint and sustainability."

"Pest Control should be free and not have to pay £28"

"Recycling - this is important"

"Keeping streets clean will help with flooding"

Town Centres & Regeneration

"If Town centres were regenerated, you wouldn't have big retail parks and would have more green spaces which would also be good for environment."

"Towns & Regeneration - Aberdare needs shops"

"Aberdare - Car parks now cheaper is brilliant - noticed an increase in cars in parks"

"Towns - nothing to draw me to Porth - lots of pound shops, mostly go to Talbot Green - parking is important."

"Towns - need a variety of shops - older people will miss out as there's nothing to do here. Big name shops closing so affects smaller shops."

"Treorchy good town centre"

"Aberdare needs more done"

"Town centre - too many empty shops / up for sale as businesses leaving. Council reduce business rates"

Empty Properties

"Council tax - empty properties, If it were my house, it's my money, I should be able to do with what I want."

"Empty properties important, little space to build new. Turn empty pubs into flats"

"It depends on circumstances (empty properties), e.g. if a parent dies and then you need to clean the house and try to sell it, which could take up to a year…"

"We've got 2 empty properties, had leaflets through our door about this and it's pushing us to do something so it's good"

"Ferndale - Council could do more about empty properties in the area."

"Empty properties - housing and affordable housing is a problem. I agree with tax for empty properties."

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"Empty Properties - should have a limit of 10 years whereby after that, the council buys it and takes over. There should be standards."

"Empty properties - if a property is empty for more than 5 years it should be bought back by the Council so it won't be empty anymore."

Leisure

"Leisure has too much funding already"

"Leisure is really important to help keep people healthy"

Play Areas and Parks

"Children play area don't need as many outside activities but think inside activities to keep entertained."

"Parks important especially for young people"

"Play areas - Better lighting needed in children's' parks - in winter when dark early you can't go there"

"Play areas very important for the children"

Extra Care/Community Hubs

"Extra care - this is important as you've got to think about the future"

"Extra care - good idea. I'm an ex NHS employee and know a lot of people struggle especially with mental health so these are good to socialise and support people without relying on NHS."

"Extra care should stay local"

"Extra Care & Community Hubs - we use Cynon linc and this is good"

"Extra care is important for me as I get older"

Employment

"Employment - Metro - updated services - hopefully this will help jobs. Not a lot of jobs in Rhondda."

"All for apprenticeships"

"Employment - having 2 grandchildren, this is important."

Events/Arts

"Use Park and Dare it is a good cheap day out, with shows, school concerts and pantomimes."

"Events - Seems to be more happening in Coliseum Aberdare, more needed in Parc & Dare."

"Parc and Dare needs a bit of tidying up. Pricey"

Other

"money should be spent on libraries"

"Community libraries in smaller areas need money."

"Free school meals for all low income households not just those unemployed for primary and secondary."

"something for teenagers to get them out off the street"

"Homelessness + housing support is currently inadequate"

Older Person Advisory Group (OPAG)

5.6 An engagement session was held with members of the OPAG reflecting the questions asked in the online questionnaire.

The general consensus from all members of the OPAG was to increase Council Tax and protect services.

"It always go up and people expect it to go up about 4%"

"3% is about right. Pembrokeshire went up 12%"

"3.6% was quite reasonable no need to reduce that, same as last year"

"Not getting council tax from empty properties."

5.7 Views on the School Budget included;

"That's our future, you can't deprive the future."

"Some buildings need refurbishing"

"Encourage teachers to come in from other areas"

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5.8   A number of <u>Fees and Charges</u> were discussed;

<u>School meals</u>

"Everything goes up and as long as it's nutritious"

"If you have a few children it can be difficult, we do fundraising with the schools."

<u>Leisure;</u>

"Not everybody can commit to a month, so it can be expensive to pay as you go"

<u>Sports clubs</u>

"Small clubs can they afford it? A lot of money for the kids clubs. Could freeze this one."

<u>Lido</u>

"Not expensive for swimming."

5.9   <u>Protect and Prioritise</u>

Very difficult to go through the list, I don't want to protect music, but there will be those that do. All should be protected.

"Schools and libraries are a priority."

"Youth provision".

5.10   <u>Efficiencies</u>

"Normally means saving money, make everything going online, that this is not good for older people. Good strategy but must still consider with older people."

"Can contribute to isolation."

5.11   <u>Council's Priorities</u>

"Roads – think there is waste of money in filling pot holes, should do the whole road."

"Invest in all of them."

"Money seems to be going to some areas more than others, people are saying, but they say the same in different areas."

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Disability Forum

5.12 An engagement session was held with the Rhondda Cynon Taf Disability Forum where a presentation was given and a general discussion held around the questions in the online questionnaire. A selection of the comments are shown below.

5.13 Council Tax

"Reshaping some of the services may make them better".

"If increased, hope that it makes a difference to services."

"Services are especially important for vulnerable people with mental health problems."

"% increase will depend on pensions and allowances".

"Councillor expenses are good value for money if they are doing a good job."

"Increase makes sense if performance is good, if not there should not be an increase in council tax."

"3% better than what has been suggested in Pembrokeshire"

5.14 Schools Budget

"What is cut because of the increase to schools?"

"What are the pension costs?"

"What happens to Special Needs Schools?"

5.15 Fees and Charges

"Freeze where possible. Increase in leisure impacts on healthy lifestyles, the same for sports club fees, due to its impact on members. It should be access for all."

"Freeze school meals"

"Adult social care gone up anyway, linked to NHS"

"Would freeze most as any increase would have an impact due to the poverty levels in the areas."

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Council Service Priorities

"*Highways and footpaths should be prioritised for accessibility and safety, including crossings.*"

5.16 Efficiencies

"*Yes, general agreement, should be more prominent. Hold to account for the services they deliver.*"

"*Public views important to report issues and to hold the Council accountable.*"

"*Feedback on the consultation important.*"

5.17 Investments

"*Attract tourism for disabled people, there is a big opportunity here.*"

"*Roads a big yes, reduce congestion, will ultimately help everyone.*"

"*Cycle routes important to reduce congestion.*"

6. YOUNG PERSON ENGAGEMENT

6.1 An engagement event was held in Aberdare with young people from the youth forums across RCT.

6.2 **<u>Feedback</u>**

The following section outlines some of the feedback received.

6.3 Similar to the other engagement activities with members of the public, the young people were provided with a number of Council investment opportunities and asked to choose their top priorities, using "RCT money". There were 11 investment boxes to choose from and young people were given £1000 (1x £500, 1x £300, 1x £150 and 1x £50) and then asked to distribute the money. Their priorities were as follows:

Table 7: Youth engagement priorities

Investment opportunities	Total
Recycling & Environment	£4,000
Employment	£2,800
Towns & Regeneration	£2,450
Extra Care & Community Hubs	£1,800
Play Areas	£1,600
Other	£1,550
Roads & Transport	£1,400
Empty Properties	£1,150
Events & Arts	£1,000
Leisure	£1,050
21st Century Schools	£800
Flood Alleviation	£400

6.4 As can be seen in the table above, the investment opportunities receiving the majority of money were recycling & environment, employment and towns and regeneration.

6.5 Following this exercise, the young people took part in a discussion with the consultation officers present asking what their priorities were, which boxes they had put their money in and why? A selection of the comments can be found below:

What is your priority?

"Play areas and parks because I don't think there are enough of them. I put £500 in the box."

"£300 in recycling because black bags aren't collected as much as they should be and more bins."

"£50 in flood alleviation."

"£500 in town centres, I'd like to see more of what they're doing in Ponty, Treorchy was shortlisted as one of the best towns."

"£300 in transport and roads"

"£150 in unemployment"

"£50 on environment as we need more bins"

"£500 on town centres."

"£300 on leisure as there's not much for young people. This forum – not many people know about it, it needs to be advertised more for young people."

"£150 on parks for youth."

"£50 unemployment as there's not much around here, build up town centres, encourage people to come here."

"£500 on roads. It's good to see connections and links to make people less reliant on cars."

"£300 on the environment because of much of the same reason."

"£150 on extra care because we need more for old people."

"£50 for employment to try and improve employment areas for modern jobs."

6.6   'Other' was the sixth highest priority with £1,550 in the box. The young people discussed why they had put their money in 'Other' and also went on to further discuss some of the other investment areas:

Other

"I didn't know what to choose, I don't like being limited with choices."

"Travel."

"Sexual health awareness and relationship in schools, it's not LGBT inclusive, we need more pastoral care."

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"Play grounds and parks, it's all well having them but they are unattended, invest in upkeep and maintenance."

"Girl guiding & cadets are severely underfunded. There are enough organisations they just have to be supported more."

"Buildings are run down and they aren't doing anything with them, bring them back into use, i.e Co-op in Tonypandy"

"Free transport for young people, especially for education. Education should be free and free to get to."

"Young people miss out on a lot of opportunities as it's expensive to get there. Places aren't easy to get to."

"Improve transport and bring it back into the community."

"Students would like to use the gym/leisure out of summer holidays to keep fit, not just in the summer holidays."

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7. Social Media Feedback

7.1 The Council provided some questions, via a poll, for social media users on the Council's Twitter and Facebook pages, providing an additional method for people to engage with the budget consultation process.

7.2 The following results were received;

Poll 1 - Do you think the Council should: Protect Council services at current level through 3% increase in Council Tax? Or Reduce service levels to close budget gap and keep increase in Council Tax to a minimum?
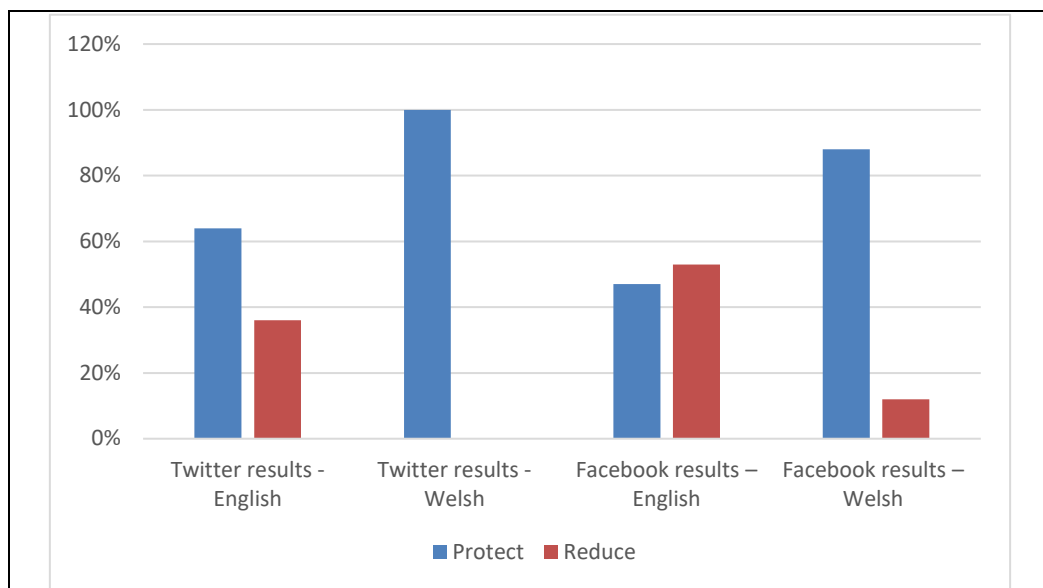

Figure 6 – Social media poll 1 results

7.3 Poll 2 - To ensure the Council can continue to maintain & improve services in the face of continued cuts to public sector funding we are focusing on the areas: Early Intervention and Prevention, Digitalisation, Independence, Efficiency, Commercialisation. Do you agree with this approach?
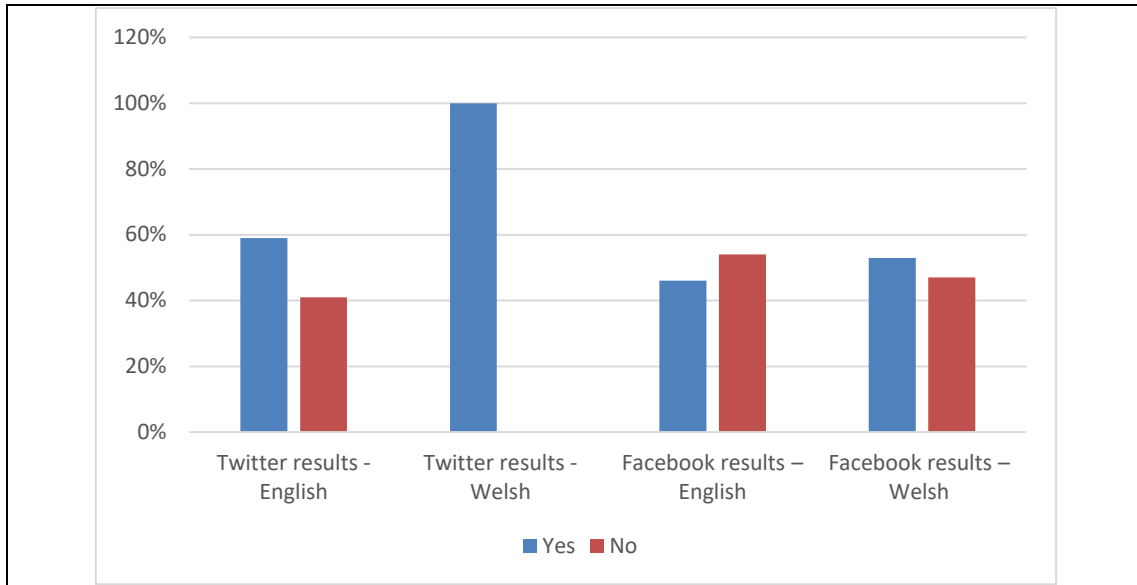
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Figure 7 – Social media poll 2 results

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