



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**A meeting of the CABINET will be held at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions,
Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX
Thursday, 13th February, 2020 at 10.30 am**

Contact: Hannah Williams - Council Business Unit (Tel No. 01443 424062)

Councillors and members of the public wishing to request the facility to address the Cabinet on any of the business as listed below, must request to do so by 5pm on the Tuesday, 11 February 2020 Councillors and Members of the public should stipulate if this address will be in the medium of English or Welsh.

It must be noted that the facility to address the Cabinet is at the discretion of the Chair and each request will be considered based on the agenda items being considered, the public interest/interest of the member in each matter and the demands of the business on that day. To make such a request please email:- ExecutiveandRegulatoryBusinessUnit@rctcbc.gov.uk

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

Note:

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

2. MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the Cabinet Committee on the 23rd January 2020 as an accurate record.

(Pages 5 - 12)

3. LEADER'S SCHEME OF DELEGATION

To receive the [Leaders Scheme of Delegation](#) following the recent amendment:

- County Borough Councillor G. Hughes appointed to the Strategic Culture and Arts Steering Group.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET STEERING GROUP

To receive the report of the Service Director, Democratic Services and Communication, which provides the Cabinet with the recommendations of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group, which met on the 28th January 2020, to consider a report on the draft Wildflower Grass Management Policy for Rhondda Cynon Taf and a report on the action that can be taken in the Air Quality Management Areas, to ensure air quality improves across the County Borough.

(Pages 13 - 62)

5. MAKING A DIFFERENCE: THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2020-2024

To receive the report of the Chief Executive, which sets out a new draft Corporate Plan from 2020-2024 for Cabinet consideration.

(Pages 63 - 112)

6. CONSIDERATION FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OFFICER ROLES

To receive the report of the Director, Education and Inclusion Services, which provides the Cabinet with an opportunity to consider the funding and consequent employment of Family Engagement Officers in six secondary/through schools to help tackle school attendance.

(Pages 113 - 122)

7. KEY STAGE 4 AND KEY STAGE 5 EXAMINATION RESULTS FOR 2019 AND PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL CATEGORISATION FOR 2019/20

To receive the report of the Director, Education and Inclusion Services, which provides Members with the final confirmation of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 examination results for 2018-19 and Primary and Secondary School Categorisation for 2019/20.

(Pages 123 - 136)

8. ITU COLLABORATION

To receive the report of the Director, Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services, which seeks Cabinet approval for the Integrated Transport Units of both Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Councils to work collaboratively to create a centre of excellence for the delivery of passenger transport services across both local authorities.

(Pages 137 - 150)

**9. SUPPORTING TOWN AND RETAIL BUSINESSES IN RHONDDA
CYNON TAF LOCAL BUSINESS RATE REDUCTION SCHEME**

To receive the report of the Director, Finance and Digital Services, which provides the Cabinet with the results of the consultation process on a local Business Rate Reduction Scheme for Rhondda Cynon Taf and an update on the continuation of the Welsh Government High Street and Retail Rate Relief (HSRR) Scheme for 2020/21.

(Pages 151 - 162)

10. URGENT ITEMS

To consider any urgent business as the Chairman feels appropriate.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Stanger', is written over a large, faint, light-colored watermark or signature that is partially visible in the background.

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Circulation:-

Councillors: Councillor A Morgan (Chair)
Councillor M Webber (Vice-Chair)
Councillor R Bevan
Councillor A Crimmings
Councillor M Norris
Councillor J Rosser
Councillor R Lewis
Councillor C Leyshon

Officers: Chris Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Christian Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Gio Isingrini, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Nigel Wheeler, Group Director – Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services
Paul Mee, Director, Public Health, Protection & Community Services
David Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Richard Evans, Director of Human Resources
Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Andy Wilkins, Director of Legal Services
Barrie Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Derek James, Service Director – Prosperity & Development



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 23 January 2020 at 10.30 am at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

County Borough Councillors - Cabinet Members in attendance:-

Councillor A Morgan (Chair)

Councillor M Webber	Councillor R Bevan
Councillor A Crimmings	Councillor M Norris
Councillor R Lewis	Councillor C Leyshon

Officers in attendance

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr G Isingrini, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Mr N Wheeler, Group Director – Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Mr P Mee, Director, Public Health, Protection & Community Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
Mr S Humphreys, Head of Legal Services
Ms A Batley, Director of Children's Services
Mr. M. Phillips, Revenues Services Manager
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services

Others in attendance

Councillor G Davies

91 Apology for Absence

An apology for absence was received from County Borough Councillor J. Rosser.

92 Declaration of Interest

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

93 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17th December 2019 as an accurate reflection.

94 Leader's Scheme of Delegation

The Service Director, Democratic Services and Communication updated Members with the changes to the Leader's Scheme of Delegation and it was **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the contents of the Leader's Scheme of Delegation
2. To note that the Leader of the Council is able to amend the Scheme of Delegation relating to executive functions at any time during the year; and that an update of the 3A will be presented to Members at the next meeting of the Cabinet.

95 Recycling within RCT - Recommendations of the Climate Change Steering Group

The Service Director, Democratic Services and Communication provided the Cabinet with the recommendations of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group, which considered a report on the recycling performance for the first 6 months of 2019/20, the new Materials Recovery Facility, future developments at Bryn Pica and potential legislative changes.

The Service Director informed Members that following discussion at their meeting on the 18th December 2019, the Steering Group were of the view that RCT Council is at the forefront of continuous improvement in the area. The Steering Group felt that the Council is in a positive position to change the recycling target to 80% by 2024/25, in conjunction with a suitable marketing campaign informing resident enforcement action will be taken if they do not recycle.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report considered by the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group on the 18th December 2019 and;
2. To change the recycling target to 80% by 2024/25.

96 Taffs Well Thermal Spring - Recommendations of the Climate Change Steering Group

The Service Director, Democratic Services and Communication provided the Cabinet with the recommendations of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group, which considered a report on the current situation with regards to the Taffs Well Spring Renewable Energy Project.

The Service Director informed the Cabinet that at their meeting on the 18th December 2019, the Steering Group were provided with a detailed PowerPoint presentation, which sought to explain the background to the project, the proposed way forward and the cost implications. The Steering Group were particularly pleased to learn that the current expected core project was expected to save 37.1 tonnes of CO₂ and agreed to recommend to Cabinet the approval of the project.

The Leader and Deputy Leader took the opportunity to thank the Steering Group for their work and the Local Member for pushing forward such a positive project.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report considered by the Climate Change

- Cabinet Steering Group on the 18th December 2019 and;
2. To approve the next steps of the project.

97 National Adoption Service Wales Annual Report 2018-2019

The Service Director, Children's Services provided the Cabinet with the National Adoption Service for Wales Annual Report, which is required to be brought before Cabinet as part of Regulation 22 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 and Section 15(c) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Regulations)(Wales) Directions 2015.

Members were referred to Appendix 1 of the report, where the Annual Report for 2018-19 was detailed. They learned that there had been an increase in the number of children placed for adoption and that the recruitment of parents remained a challenge. The officer went on to speak of the £2.3M investment from Welsh Government, which had been established to support the priorities and potentially improve the performance.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report.

98 Delegate authority to enforce the provisions of the Renting of Homes (Fees etc) (Wales) Act 2019

The Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services provided the Cabinet with the report, which sought delegated authority to the Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services and to the single Licensing Authority in Wales (Rent Smart Wales) to use the enforcement powers of the Renting Homes (Fees etc.) (Wales) Act 2019.

The Director spoke of the Renting Homes (Fees etc.) (Wales) Act 2019, which came into force on 5th May 2019. It was explained that letting agents and landlords who manage their own properties are prevented from charging any fees before, during or after a tenancy unless specifically exempt in the Act.

The Director drew Members' attention to Section 4.4 of the report, where the permitted payments that can be required by letting agents and self-managing landlords was outlined. It was explained that the enforcement of the new requirements could be undertaken by the Council and Rent Smart Wales and would contribute to a fairer and more transparent experience for tenants relying on the private rented sector.

Prior to discussion, the Director advised Members of an error in Section 2.1 of the report and asked that should they be minded to approve the recommendations, the word 'of' be removed from 'Renting of Homes (Fees etc.) (Wales) Act 2019'.

The Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and the Welsh Language spoke positive of the Renting Homes (Fees etc.) (Wales) Act 2019, commenting that it improves the rights of tenants, whilst providing financial security to residents.

The Deputy Leader queried whether the Act would have a positive effect on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), to which the Director confirmed that it was a positive step forward in that respect and would prevent loan agreements etc.

The Cabinet were happy to provide support, subject to the amendment of Section 2.1 and it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To give delegated authority to the Director of Public Health, Protection & Community Services for enforcing the provisions of the Renting Homes (Fees etc.) (Wales) Act 2019 and note that the Monitoring Officer would make any consequential amendment(s) required to the Council's Constitution; and
2. To give delegated authority to the Operational Manager for Rent Smart Wales for enforcing the provisions of the Renting Homes (Fees etc.) (Wales) Act 2019 on behalf of Cardiff City Council and note that the Monitoring Officer would make any consequential amendment(s) required to the Council's Constitution.

99 The Council's 2020/2021 Revenue Budget

The Director, Finance and Digital Services provided the Cabinet with information in respect of the 2020/2021 local government settlement and the outcomes of the budget consultation phase 1 exercise, to assist with deliberations in formulating the revenue budget strategy for the financial year 2020/21.

The Director drew Members' attention to Appendix A of the report, where a discussion paper had been prepared by the Council's Senior Leadership Team in response to the 2020/21 Local Government Settlement. The officers had due regard to the new draft Corporate Plan "Making a Difference" 2020-2024, when formulating the proposals set out in the report. The report detailed officer's views, which is to levy the Council Tax for 2020/21 at a level which balances the desire for fair and equitable service provision, with the need to recognise the impact that excessive tax burdens can have on local households.

The Director spoke of the *Provisional* 2020/2021 Local Government Settlement, which projected RCT Council's increase in resources to be set at 4.5%. It was explained that, whilst the Council's overall financial position remains sound, its level of General Fund Balances are not excessive. Therefore, it must retain its focus on holding a minimum level of General Fund Balances of £10M, in order to mitigate any risk of future budget instability. Alongside this, there is the opportunity to pragmatically use the Medium Term Financial Planning and Service Transformation Reserve as transitional funding without compromising the Council's financial stability, or reducing our General Fund Balances below £10M.

In respect of setting the level of Council Tax, the Director, spoke of reasonable and approach, which would balance the impact upon services and the ability of the public to pay. He continued by informing the Cabinet of the feedback from Phase 1 of the consultation process, which sought the views of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee, residents and stakeholders in relation to the key strategic building blocks used to construct the Council's budget. Members noted that the original modelled proposal was to increase Council Tax in 2020/21 by 3.00%, but it was proposed that Council Tax be increased by 2.85% instead, which would increase the remaining budget gap by £0.132M.

The Director drew Members' attention to Section 8 of the Senior Leadership Team report where the 2020/21 Budget proposals were set out for Cabinet consideration. The proposals sought to continue to protect the frontline services

and prioritise key areas, such as the School's Budget (ISB) increase from £148.9M to £161.6M, an increase of £12.7M, or 8.5%.

The Director provided detail into the following proposals:

- NDR Local Relief Scheme
- Youth Engagement / Youth Offending
- Paddling Pools
- Prudential Borrowing for Investment in our Infrastructure
- Supporting the Muni Arts Centre
- Fees and Charges
- Home to School Transport Re-tender Savings
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)
- Supported Accommodation Strategy and Savings

The Director concluded by informing the Cabinet that should they be minded to approve the proposals before them, Phase 2 of the consultation would commence with immediate effect. The draft Budget Strategy would be presented to Cabinet for approval on 20th February 2020 and then to Council for ratification on 4th March 2020.

The Leader took the opportunity to thank the Senior Leadership Team, finance officers and service managers for the robust report, which would allow the Council to further reduce the budget gap, whilst maintaining or increasing key services for the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Leader was pleased to note that the proposals showed the largest cash increase for schools at almost 13M, 9.3M increase for social care, 13% increase in the youth provision budget and £50,000 for paddling pools. The Leader advised that whilst significantly investing in its services, RCT had proposed possibly the lowest increase in Council Tax in comparison to its neighbouring Local Authorities, where service cuts were still being proposed.

Referring to the Phase 1 consultation feedback, the Leader advised that 80.8% of residents indicated that they would pay a 3% increase in Council Tax to maintain the current level of services, and that the proposed increase was in fact 2.85%.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services also took the opportunity to thank the officers for the comprehensive report. The Cabinet Member welcomed the proposal, commenting that although under significant pressures, the Council remained focussed on uplifting areas such as schools and youth provision.

The Deputy Leader spoke of the consultation process and was pleased to note that 90% of the residents consulted agreed on the 5 key priority areas; and went on to thank OPAG, the County Youth Forum and the Disability Forum for their valued input. The Deputy went on to speak of the investment into the Muni Arts Centre, YMCA and Taff Vale developments, which would contribute to making Pontypridd a vibrant town centre.

Discussions ensued around the proposal to include £50,000 in the Budget Strategy for paddling pools. The Cabinet recognised the success stories and added value of involving community groups for wider developments.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Heritage Services spoke of the 50p increase for adult swims at the Lido, commenting that it was pleasing to

see that residents value the facility and are willing to pay more.

With the agreement of the Leader, as Chairman of the Committee, County Borough Councillor G. Davies spoke on the item, to which the Cabinet Members responded.

In response to the Member's suggestions, the Leader emphasised the need to prioritise across service areas, whilst strongly taking into consideration, the impact that excessive tax burdens can have on residents.

Discussions ensued around youth provision, with Cabinet Members commenting that the Council's investments in education, town centre Wi-Fi, leisure, play areas, theatre and sport groups all benefit young people as the people of the future. Members also spoke of the Council's Graduate and Apprenticeship Scheme, which provides young people with training, skills and employment opportunities, despite being a revenue cost to the Council.

The Leader advised that other political Groups were welcome to put forward alternative budget proposals for consideration.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services proposed freezing the charges for school meals for two years, after the 5p increase in 2020/2021, to which the other Members agreed.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note that the procedures relating to revenue budget construction, the budget consultation process, and reporting to Council, are set out in the "Budget and Policy Framework" within the Council's Constitution;
2. To note and consider the outcomes of the budget consultation phase 1 process;
3. The draft 2020/2021 Revenue Budget Strategy, detailed in the attached Discussion Paper 'Appendix A', as the basis upon which a second phase of consultation will take place;
4. To propose freezing the charges for school meals for two years, after the 5p increase in 2020/2021;
5. The draft timetable for setting the 2020/2021 revenue budget as set out at Appendix A2;
6. To receive feedback from the second phase of budget consultation in order to consider and determine the final budget strategy for submission to Council; and
7. That the Council continues to support the medium term financial strategy aimed at maximising ongoing efficiency in service delivery, targeted service transformation and other changes that maintain the financial integrity of the Council whilst still aiming as much as possible to protect jobs and key services.

100 To consider Passing the Following Resolution:

It was **RESOLVED:** "That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of the exempt information as defined in paragraph XX of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act".

101 Corporate Asset Management Plan Interim Update

Following the consideration of the report of the Director, Corporate Estates containing exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to the financial affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), it was **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report; and
2. To increase the target to 35% for the reduction of the office accommodation footprint by 2021/22.

102 Write Off of Irrecoverable Debts

Following the consideration of the report of the Director, Finance and Digital Services containing exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to the financial affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), it was **RESOLVED:**

1. To write-off the accounts set out in Appendix 2 to the appropriate Bad Debt Provision contained within the Council's accounts (if further information on any debt becomes available, payment to be pursued).

This meeting closed at 11.45 am

**Cllr A Morgan
Chairman.**

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

13TH FEBRUARY 2020

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET STEERING GROUP

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION IN CONSULTATION WITH COUNCILLOR RHYS LEWIS (CLIMATE CHANGE CHAMPION)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Cabinet with the recommendations of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group, which met on the 28th January 2020, to consider a report on the draft Wildflower Grass Management Policy for Rhondda Cynon Taf and a report on the action that can be taken in the Air Quality Management Areas, to ensure air quality improves across the County Borough.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the content of the two reports considered by the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group on the 28th January 2020, which are attached as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 to the report and;
- 2.2 Agree the recommendations of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group:
- I. To approve the Wildflower Grass Management Policy for Rhondda Cynon Taf
 - II. To continue progressing with the short-term and practicable actions identified in Table B of the Air Quality Management Areas report;
 - III. That having regard to the current local circumstances, the Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services work with the Group Director of Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services to identify the viable, long-term actions from Table B of the Air Quality Management Areas report, to include in the Council's Highway Capital Programme for Cabinet consideration; and
 - IV. That the Council seek to engage with its residents on the Clean Air Day, which is taking place on 20th June 2020, which is funded by the Welsh government and forms part of the wider Clean Air Day campaign across the UK.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To acknowledge the work of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group and their recommendations.

4. THE CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET STEERING GROUP

- 4.1 The Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group met on the 28th January 2020, where they considered the following reports:

4.2 THE DRAFT WILDFLOWER GRASS MANAGEMENT POLICY FOR RHONDDA CYNON TAF.

- 4.3 In recent years, the loss of wildflower grassland habitats and the pollinating insects they support has become an issue of public concern. Publically owned grasslands and grass verges have significant potential as reservoirs of wildflower rich habitat that can contribute to reconnecting and restoring grassland biodiversity. As these areas are in public view, they also offer opportunities for awareness raising, local community support and action.

- 4.2 Following its consideration of the report on the [Council's Biodiversity](#) at its meeting in December 2019, the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group considered the report of the Group Director of Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services and the Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services, which sought the Steering Group's feedback on the draft Wildflower Grass Management Policy for Rhondda Cynon Taf.

- 4.3 The Steering Group were informed that whilst biodiversity has been lost in certain parts of the UK, Rhondda Cynon Taf is fortunate to have a wide range of native wildflowers growing naturally in its fields, verges and woodlands. All of the plants are perfectly adapted to the soil, climate and habitat and are part of the 'ecosystem' providing food not only for pollinators but for many insects and other animals.

- 4.4 The Steering Group were in favour of the proposals to increase the number of sites in wildflower management and to establish a Biodiversity website, which would be used to engage the community by providing information and raise awareness.

- 4.5 Discussions ensued around the 'Grab a Rake' campaign, which had been devised to involve the local community in the management of some of the grass verges left for biodiversity. Members spoke positive of including the community in the campaign and the additional education value, commenting that community ownership is essential in raising awareness.

- 4.6 The Steering Group agreed that a clear message would need to be promoted to ensure that communities are fully aware that the uncut grass is a positive

measure. As such, Members were of the view that appropriate signage would need to be established at the sites.

4.7 Members of the Steering Group spoke of their own experiences with similar community initiatives and acknowledged that smaller, cost-effective schemes contribute to the wider agenda.

4.8 WHAT ACTION CAN BE TAKEN TO IMPROVE THE AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREAS, TO ENSURE AIR QUALITY IMPROVES ACROSS THE COUNTY BOROUGH.

4.9 Poor air quality is the largest environmental risk to public health in the [UK](#) and is a public health priority for [Wales](#). It has been estimated that the annual mortality burden of human-made air pollution in the UK is 28,000 to 36,000 deaths every year, in comparison 20,000 deaths have been attributed to alcohol related diseases and obesity is currently believed to be responsible for more than 30,000 deaths every year. It is understood that often the most vulnerable within our communities are most at risk from the potential effects of air pollutants and perversely are more often likely to experience it.

4.10 The Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group considered the report of the Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services. The report sought consideration of the action that can be taken in the Air Quality Management Areas, to ensure air quality improves across the County Borough.

4.11 The Steering Group were provided with examples of the 16 Air Quality Management areas identified within Rhondda Cynon Taf and were pleased to note that the majority of the Borough is believed to experience good air quality and that those areas identified were isolated hot spots. They were informed that very specific local circumstances can result in levels of Nitrogen Dioxide that can exceed an Air Quality Objective.

4.12 The Steering Group were informed of the grant funding, which had been utilised to deliver improved street lighting to serve the active travel access route to Pontypridd High School. It was acknowledged that the holistic, multi-agenda outcome approach had been essential and had benefited a number of agendas, including local engagement, active travel, air quality, climate change and biodiversity.

4.13 The Steering Group were referred to Appendix 1 of the report, where the individual Air Quality Action Plans were listed. A number of the improvements were considered to be practical in delivering short-term air quality improvement within the Air Quality Management Areas. However, the Steering Group acknowledged that the current transport related issues and infrastructure within RCT would not sufficiently support some of the long-term, sustainable actions identified. It was therefore recommended that discussions continue to take place between the Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services and the Group Director of Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services to identify the viable, long-term actions from Table B of the report, to include in the Council's Highway Capital Programme for Cabinet consideration.

- 4.14 Discussions ensued around community engagement and the Clean Air Day, which is taking place on 20th June 2020, which is funded by the Welsh government and forms part of the wider Clean Air Day campaign across the UK. The Steering Group felt that the Council's participation in the initiative would promote a positive message to its residents but agreed that the correct message would need to be conveyed, whether that be in respect of car sharing, cycling to work or tree planting.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 5.1 In respect of the draft Wildflower Grass Management Policy, the Council has a statutory biodiversity duty under S.6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and general responsibilities with regard to land management under various Acts including Highways legislation.
- 5.2 There are no legal implications aligned to the Air Quality Management Areas report.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no equality or diversity implications as a result of the recommendations set out within the report.

7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 The draft Wildflower Grass Management Policy has been developed in consultation with Council staff who have responsibility and practical expertise in grassland management as well the Council's ecologist. Local residents and Councillors have contributed to the pilot projects, some being actively involved in 'Grab a Rake' to remove cuttings from small sites which are unsuitable for 'cut and collect' machinery.
- 7.2 There are no Consultation implications aligned to the Air Quality Management Areas report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 Over the course of the next few years the Council will seek to realign its revenue and capital budgets to ensure that it has the financial resources to invest in major projects that can have a positive impact on reducing the Council's carbon footprint.
- 8.2 There are likely to be some minor financial implications associated with the draft Wildflower Grass Management report. The Council's grassland management budget is significant and the changes proposed can largely be accommodated within this. There may be additional costs associated with removing cut material, however this should be balanced but the reduced frequency of cuts on these sites. The pilots have demonstrated that, over time, the volume of cut

material decreases as the wildflower percentage increases. Site signage is likely to be expanded, using the brimstone butterfly emblem, to mark sites in conservation management. The machinery required for 'cut and collect' is different to routine grass cutting and its use requires training for the operatives. The current tracked machine has a large capacity and is suitable for cutting wet ground outside the routine grass cutting season. The machine and the initial staff training was largely funded by grant aid from Natural Resources Wales. As the programme develops, there will be a need for additional machinery (in particular for smaller sites) for repairs and eventual replacement and for additional staff training.

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

- 9.1 The work of the Climate Change Steering Group will seek to reduce the impact the Council and its residents and businesses have on the environment and enable the Council to make progress towards achieving the 2030 target.
- 9.2 All reports considered by the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group will take full regard to the seven national wellbeing goals.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The Council's Cabinet has revisited its commitment to becoming a Carbon Neutral Council, and has set an ambitious target of achieving this by 2030, along with the residents and businesses of the County Borough. The Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group has set out an ambitious programme to enable the Council to make progress towards achieving the 2030 target.
- 10.2 On the 28th January 2020, the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group met to consider a report on the draft Wildflower Grass Management Policy for Rhondda Cynon Taf and a report on the action that can be taken in the Air Quality Management Areas, to ensure air quality improves across the County Borough.
- 10.3 The recommendations of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group have been put forward for Cabinet consideration.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

13TH FEBRUARY 2020

**CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT WILDFLOWER GRASS MANAGEMENT
POLICY FOR RHONDDA CYNON TAF - RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET STEERING GROUP**

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND
COMMUNICATION IN CONSULTATION WITH COUNCILLOR RHYS LEWIS
(CLIMATE CHANGE CHAMPION)**



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

28TH JANUARY 2020

WHAT ACTION CAN BE TAKEN IN THE AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREAS, TO ENSURE AIR QUALITY IMPROVES ACROSS THE COUNTY BOROUGH

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET'S CLIMATE CHANGE CHAMPION (COUNCILLOR RHYS LEWIS)

**Author(s): Neil Pilliner, Environmental Protection & Housing Standards
Manager, Gareth Purnell, Pollution Control Officer**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider what action can be taken in the Air Quality Management Areas, to ensure air quality improves across the County Borough.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended to note the contents of this report as part of the ongoing work of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group and recommend a way forward for Cabinet.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The contents of this report provides key air quality information as required by the Discussion Paper 'Work Programme for the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group'

4. BACKGROUND TO LOCAL AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 It has been understood for some time that the quality of air that people experience can have a substantial effect on their health and wellbeing. Since the first half of the 20th century, awareness amongst the general public of the importance of air quality has increased significantly. Originally emphasised within the UK by the visually dramatic sulphurous smog events of the 50s, then subsequently by the phasing out of anti-knocking lead in petrol during the 90s and up to the present day by photochemical smog associated with international cities such as Los Angeles, New Delhi and Beijing.

- 4.2 Although indoor air quality can be highly relevant to a person's health, by necessity Local Air Quality Management is focused upon the public's exposure to outdoor air pollutants¹.
- 4.3 The understanding of air quality has substantively evolved over time as the causes of air pollution have changed. Within Rhondda Cynon Taf, as is the case throughout Wales, Nitrogen Dioxide² [NO₂] and Particulate Matter³ [PM₁₀] are of the most concern, due to their ubiquitous prevalence and potential significant impact upon public health. Short-term exposure to elevated levels of Particulate Matter [PM₁₀] has been shown to cause eye, nose and throat irritation, asthma symptom exacerbation, headaches and nausea. Longer-term exposure has been linked to an increase in morbidity⁴ and higher mortality risks associated with heart disease, stroke, respiratory diseases, lung cancer, etc. The Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP) has established that short-term exposure to NO₂, particularly at high concentrations, is a respiratory irritant that can cause inflammation of the airways leading to, for example, cough, production of mucus and shortness of breath. Studies have shown associations of NO₂ in outdoor air with reduced lung development, and respiratory infections in early childhood and effects on lung function in adulthood.
- 4.4 Poor air quality is the largest environmental risk to public health in the [UK](#) and is a public health priority for [Wales](#). It has been estimated that the annual mortality burden of human-made air pollution in the UK is 28,000 to 36,000 deaths every year, in comparison 20,000 deaths have been attributed to alcohol related diseases and obesity is currently believed to be responsible for more than 30,000 deaths every year. It is understood that often the most vulnerable within our communities are most at risk from the potential effects of air pollutants and perversely are more often likely to experience it. The unborn child, children, the old, those suffering from certain common medical conditions and those on low incomes can be particularly [vulnerable](#) to poor air quality. Although the discussion on air quality focuses upon public health, poor air quality can also cause, agricultural and ecological damage, property devaluation and entrench economic disparity.
- 4.5 Acknowledging the strategic role local government can have in managing air quality, relevant legislation and associated regulations have been enacted. Notably the Clean Air Act 1993⁵, Environmental Protection Act 1990⁶,

¹ Seven 'pollutants of concern' relevant to Local Air Quality Management are Carbon Monoxide (CO), Benzene (C₆H₆), Butadiene (C₄H₆), Lead (Pb), Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), Particulate Matter (PM₁₀) & Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂)

² A gas made from Nitrogen and Oxygen, often formed by complex chemical interactions and heavily associated with emissions from high temperature combustion processes, in very high concentrations it can appear brownish and have an acrid odour but in concentrations normally encountered in the environment it is imperceptible.

³ Particulate Matter is a generic term to describe a complex mixture of solid and semi-liquid particles of varying size, shape and composition. A range of man-made and natural activities as well as the interaction of other air pollutants can produce Particulate Matter. PM₁₀ refers to Particle Matter of a size normally less than 10µm, which are invisible to the human eye, but can be inhaled into the airways and lungs of people.

⁴ The incidence of disease within the population

⁵ The regulation of emissions from certain small industrial and domestic sources of air pollution, however, it is widely acknowledged that the legislation may have become outdated and lacks relevance.

⁶ Mechanism to prevent or control certain types of statutory nuisance that can cause air pollution.

Environment Act 1995⁷, Pollution Prevention and Control Act 2000⁸ and the Well-being of Future Generations Wales Act 2015⁹. This has resulted in Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC having a number of statutory duties to not only prevent or control air pollution but also to actively assess and intervene to improve local air quality where it can.

5. ASSESSING LOCAL AIR QUALITY IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

- 5.1 Local Air Quality Management can cut across many areas of Local Government. Although primarily it has relevance to Public Health, it can also have a role within Environmental Regulation & Enforcement, Development Control, Housing, Highways, Fleet Management, Corporate Estates, Ecology and Education.
- 5.2 Statutory [guidance](#) provides detailed instruction on how local authorities should go about assessing air quality to confirm if any [Air Quality Objectives](#) are being exceeded¹⁰. These Air Quality Objectives relate to outdoor locations where air pollutants are most likely to be elevated and where the public¹¹, irrespective of who they are, is likely to be present for long enough to be potentially effected by them. If an Air Quality Objective is not achieved, guidance sets out how Local Authorities should go about considering the implementation of actions to work towards achieving future compliance.
- 5.3 Having regard to guidance, published national assessment, local understanding, desktop analysis and current technical capabilities, the Local Authority has developed a network of air quality monitoring locations throughout its area. Since the millennium, it has examined over 134 locations with current¹² monitoring arrangements assessing 55 targeted roadside locations for Nitrogen Dioxide [NO₂] and one specific area of interest for Particulate Matter [PM₁₀] associated with a local quarry.
- 5.4 The current monitoring network makes use of several different approved automatic¹³ and non-automatic¹⁴ monitoring techniques. With the gathered data routinely published [online](#) collaboratively with Welsh Government. It is not always possible, either as a result of logistics or resources, to monitor all relevant locations and in certain circumstances the Local Authority has, where appropriate, had regard to computer ‘modelling’ to indicate the likely levels of air pollutants at particular locations.
- 5.5 Every year, the Local Authority [publishes](#) online an annual Air Quality Progress Report. This provides the preceding years ratified monitoring data, an overview

⁷ Legal framework for Local Air Quality Management, including the duty to assess and intervene.

⁸ Permitting of certain industrial activities and their emissions.

⁹ Enshrines the seven “Well-being Goals” and the importance of sustainable development.

¹⁰ Absolute concentration values(s) set for each relevant pollutant over specific exposure periods

¹¹ This does not include workers but does include the public attending a workplace (e.g. a library)

¹² As of January 2020

¹³ Analyses the air pollutant at location and provides a real-time indication of its concentration.

¹⁴ Requires subsequent analysis in a laboratory to determine the air pollutants concentrations.

of actions that could affect local air quality and an assessment of current Local Air Quality Management.

- 5.6 As a result of the integration of the Future Generations ethos, a dual approach to Local Air Quality Management is developing. This burden reduction approach recognises that for many air pollutants, the less people are exposed to them, the better it will be in terms of public health. The Future Generations agenda has also led to the consideration of air quality holistically, rather than in isolation, as part of the multi-agenda approach with particular emphasis on local transport, noise, climate change, active travel and green-infrastructure.
- 5.7 Adverse environmental noise can also markedly affect public health. In recognition of the close relationship between areas of elevated levels of air pollution and human-made environmental noise, Local Air Quality Management also evaluates its role in achieving Noise Action Plan Priority Area [NAPPA] improvements. There are a number of [NAPPAs](#) within Rhondda Cynon Taf, many of these areas have also been declared Air Quality Management Areas.
- 5.8 In recognising the importance of health inequality and local air quality, the Local Authority has assisted its partners, Public Health Wales, Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB, Natural Resources Wales and Merthyr Tydfil CBC, with the development of the Health and Air Pollution Risk Assessment/Area Prioritisation ([HAP-RAP](#)) analytical tool. This has been used to identify those communities¹⁵ within Rhondda Cynon Taf that may be most vulnerable to the effects of poor air quality and where measures focused to improve air quality may provide the greatest overall benefit.

6. LOCAL AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREAS AND THE TREND IN AIR QUALITY

- 6.1 The levels of air pollution [experienced](#) locally can be as a result of a number of different types of sources, both within the Borough and further afield¹⁶. Generally local Nitrogen Dioxide [NO₂] levels are primarily influenced by road traffic sources. Nationally air quality has generally improved over time as the adoption of new technology, macroeconomic change and regulation has reduced the amount of total air pollution emitted. Nitrogen Dioxide [NO₂] levels, have not improved as quickly as had been expected. In RCT a worsening trend in Nitrogen Dioxide [NO₂] was observed for several years after the Millennium. Most likely due to substantial local and regional urbanisation, associated traffic growth and the increase in use of diesel cars. Since then the trend has stabilised and more recently shown some general signs of gradual improvement.
- 6.2 It is expected that as cleaner technology and sustainable mass transport options become available levels of air pollution will reduce, however, significant uncertainty is attached to how society, and its transport options, will change.

¹⁵ Priority clusters were associated with Ferndale/Tylorstown/Llwynypia, Cymmer and Penrhiwceiber/Miskin

¹⁶ Both pollutants can be heavily influenced by transboundary pollution events (emissions of air pollution that has crossed great distances before arriving locally).

- 6.3 Although the vast majority of Rhondda Cynon Taf is believed to experience good air quality, very specific local circumstances can result in levels of Nitrogen Dioxide that can exceed an Air Quality Objective. This has resulted in sixteen, comparatively small areas within the County Borough declared as Air Quality Management Areas [AQMAs]. They cover a range of different urban areas from some town centres to the length of certain streets or even a small number of properties close to particularly busy roads or junctions. Currently the largest AQMA in the County Borough covers 207 properties within the Aberdare Town Centre, whereas, the smallest covers one property near a very busy road junction at Mwyndy. It is also the case that not all AQMAs, or parts of the same AQMA, may experience the same degree of elevated air pollution. At present it is believed the Cymmer, Ferndale and Nightingales Bush AQMAs may experience the highest observed levels of air pollution, whereas, Aberdare, Tonyrefail and Treforest may be much closer to achieving compliance.
- 6.4 It can be difficult to make meaningful comparisons of the number, size and severity of AQMAs between Welsh Local Authorities. For instance, Rhondda Cynon Taf may observe a larger number of AQMAs when compared to Cardiff, which has four AQMAs, or Swansea, which has one AQMA, however, the AQMAs declared in these two cities cover much greater areas and numbers of people. In general terms Rhondda Cynon Taf is ranked 13th best for levels of Nitrogen Dioxide [NO₂] out of the 22 Local Authorities in Wales¹⁷.
- 6.5 The reasons for the AQMAs are varied but are invariably associated with road traffic emissions. Although the reasons can be very location specific, they often include the importance of local topography and the urban environment. The volume, speed and composition of road traffic, as well as the management of this traffic, along roads within, or nearby to, each AQMA are also key factors. Some strategic arterial roads, for instance the A470 and the A4119, have a demonstrable effect at certain vulnerable locations. Table A in Appendix 1 provides further detail on each Air Quality Management Area within Rhondda Cynon Taf, including the number of properties in each area, the improvement required and the key air quality related factors.

7. IMPROVING LOCAL AIR QUALITY

- 7.1 At the local level action can be taken to improve air quality, often in conjunction with other agendas, both at locations where levels of air pollutants are elevated and more generally throughout the community. With regards to the Air Quality Management Areas, the Local Authority has adopted individual Air Quality Action Plans [AQAPs] that advocate cost-effective/cost-beneficial actions that would work towards the aspiration of compliance with the Air Quality Objectives. These actions are varied, and include specific actions relating to an Air Quality Management Area, to more far reaching actions that could improve air quality more widely. Several of these actions have already been implemented, however, it has not been possible to advance all actions to date.

¹⁷ Population weighted exposure to Nitrogen Dioxide.

- 7.2 Appendix 1 Table B contains a list of various practical improvement actions that could deliver air quality improvement within the Air Quality Management Areas and potentially more broadly throughout the County Borough. Having regard to local circumstances and the often transport related issues associated with improving air quality, some potential viable actions have been identified from the list in Table B for further detailed consideration with the relevant partners. These have been listed with additional information within Appendix 1 Table C.

8. FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES FOR LOCAL AIR QUALITY

- 8.1 To enable effective assessment of local air quality, over time the Local Authority has put in place a targeted monitoring network. This has enabled an evidenced based approach to policy formation, decision making and improvement actions. Supporting not only Local Air Quality Management duties directly but also other priority agendas as well as sustainable local development. Due to continued resource pressures, this network has inevitably been optimised to meet statutory requirements and the monitoring network may not currently satisfy the wider public interest in air quality or developing policy areas. In addition, as monitoring equipment approaches 'end of life', decisions will be required on further investment or rationalisation of the monitoring infrastructure.
- 8.2 Sustainable economic development and the potential future adoption of 'cleaner' technologies will likely advance improvement in local air quality over time. However, without intervention, the most vulnerable communities may be the last to experience the anticipated improvement¹⁸. With the lack of dedicated external grant funding and the prioritisation of other activities, resourcing improvement actions is likely to be a substantive barrier to progressing Local Air Quality Management. Additionally, although it is acknowledged that many departments of the Local Authority could positively impact local air quality it has been challenging to provide a coordinated holistic approach in the consideration and implementation of improvement actions. This has led to the identification and delivery of 'win-win' multi-agenda outcomes becoming an increasingly important factor in obtaining potential funding and raising awareness of understanding the need to improve air quality across a variety of policy areas and decision makers.
- 8.3 Cross-agenda delivery has had a recognised role in local air quality management for some time. For instance, due to significant investment cost it would be unlikely that the Church Village Bypass would have been a viable action to improve air quality in isolation, however, its viability to improve local amenity and drive economic development enabled this project to go forward. In doing so, this has had a dramatic role in improving local air quality and environmental noise within a number of communities along the B4595. The inclusion of active travel links via the Community route also reflected the

¹⁸ Cleaner technology can include a range of innovative solutions, including renewable energy, the uptake of low emission vehicles, alternative powered domestic heating, the use of information technology to reduce travel need, improve travel options (i.e. single-trip hire schemes) or facilitate more efficient coordinated travel. The use of some forms of cleaner technology may incur an initial cost or technological awareness, which the poorest or most vulnerable in society may find challenging.

consideration of sustainable travel options when planning the by-pass road and the impact on the local community.

- 8.4 By using, where appropriate, a 'win-win' multi-agenda outcome approach it is not only possible to deliver the obvious actions that could directly improve air quality but also bring together a range of experiences and expertise to enable the identification of potentially cost-effective solutions that deliver a wider range of sustainable benefits. For example, the utilisation of grant funding¹⁹ to deliver improved/repaired street lighting serving the active travel access route to Pontypridd High School. This action benefited a number of agendas, including local engagement (action identified after engagement with the High School), active travel (further improving safety and reducing perceived barriers to the use of the designated active travel route), air quality & climate change (by enabling active travel this may directly reduce dependency on vehicle and associated air pollution and carbon emissions) and biodiversity (it was possible to tailor the action so as its impact on nocturnal wildlife could be reduced).
- 8.5 It is likely that Climate Change, with an increasingly erratic climate, may negatively impact upon future air quality, potentially by making elevated air pollution episodes more frequent and more intense. As such, a need to consider novel yet deliverable solutions is paramount with sustainable transport, green infrastructure and behavioural change seen as representing significant potential in delivering broad improvement. These broader actions need to be considered alongside appropriate local traffic management solutions to benefit air quality by improving and influencing traffic flow in key areas.
- 8.6 Current public interest in Local Air Quality Management can mean that the air quality agenda could become a strong agent for positive change. As air quality understanding and expectations has evolved, Welsh Government policy in this area has also rapidly developed. Currently the Welsh Government is [consulting](#) upon a number of changes to how Local Air Quality Management may be delivered, these proposed changes may have the potential to alter the Council's statutory obligations and require reconsideration of how it goes about delivering Local Air Quality Management duties in the future.

9. CARBON REDUCTION

- 9.1 The interaction between Air Pollution and Climate Change is complex, with inextricable overlap between both agendas. It is likely that many actions to improve air quality will have a complimentary effect in tackling Climate Change, particularly in respect of reducing vehicle use through more sustainable travel options. However, not all actions to improve air pollution will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and vice versa. For instance, the building of a new road to divert road traffic from an area where air pollution may be elevated, could result in traffic growth along the new road and an overall increase in greenhouse gas emissions. As with the Church Village bypass and the proposed Llanharan Bypass, incorporating active travel measures are key design factors in providing sustainable travel options for communities. Wherever possible, those

¹⁹ Local Authority Single Revenue Grant 2017-18

actions that improve both agendas should be prioritised and efforts made to jointly assess both air quality and climate change impacts during the evaluation of improvement actions.

10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 This report is informative, as such an Equality Impact Assessment is not required. As air quality improvement actions (or inaction) has the potential to affect certain groups, during the compilation or review of an Air Quality Action Plan(s), a proportionate Equality Impact Assessment will be included.

11. CONSULTATION

11.1 This report has been produced to provide air quality information as required by the Work Programme for the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group and, as such, no formal consultation is necessary.

11.2 Local Air Quality Management is, at various stages, subject to statutory consultations, including formal annual review by Welsh Government, and the maintenance of certain information within a public register. The Local Authority is currently planning, in accordance with statutory guidance to review, and where necessary to modify, all sixteen Air Quality Action Plans in 2020 to ensure their appropriateness.

12. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1 This report is informative only and does not commit any resources to any particular course of action.

12.2 Currently only a limited air quality monitoring budget is maintained and there is no dedicated budget for improvement action delivery.

13. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

13.1 This report on air quality is informative only and is not a decision making report with regards to any Local Air Quality Management obligations.

13.2 Annual Air Quality Progress Reports are statutory reports which the Local Authority is obliged to produce. Air Quality Action Plans are statutory plans and may place the Local Authority under certain obligations, including the need to work towards delivering the identified actions so as to achieve compliance to an Air Quality Objective. During the formation or review of the Air Quality Action Plan a provisional assessment of the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment [SEA] will be undertaken.

13.3 Welsh Government retains a number of reserve powers, including legal direction, to ensure Local Authorities undertake their Local Air Quality Management duties. It has previously clarified the likely scenarios as to when and how it may use some of these powers. In recent times, Welsh Government has exercised legal direction powers under Section 85 of the Environment Act

1995 requiring, separately, Cardiff CC and Caerphilly CBC to undertake certain assessments and advance certain improvement actions, that may have significant local impact, in relation to Local Air Quality Management.

14. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS WALES ACT

- 14.1 Local air quality management statutory guidance for Wales incorporates the principles and ways of working associated within the Well-being of Future Generations Act. By abiding by this guidance and utilising methods that acknowledge and promote sustainable multi-agenda delivery, the Council is demonstrating commitment to the principles of the Act.
- 14.2 The Future Generation agenda will also have a key role in how the Local Authority considers air quality, reinforced by guidance requiring that as part of its assessment duties the Local Authority must have regard to the benchmarking of progress against [National Indicator No.4](#). “the level of Nitrogen Dioxide in ambient air”. In contrast to the upper limit driven approach of Local Air Quality Management, the National Indicator drives an alternative burden reduction approach aimed at achieving a reduction in the population weighted general level of Nitrogen Dioxide throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf. Progress in achieving improvement will be gauged against milestones, the achievement of which will be reported in a “Future Trends Report” produced by Welsh Government. In working with its health related partners, the Local Authority has drawn upon expertise and analysis to help identify those communities which may benefit the most from an active approach to improve local air quality, whilst also seeking to fulfil the Local Authorities statutory obligation on local air quality management.
- 14.3 Having regard to the Council’s corporate priorities, air quality improvement and potential actions to bring this about, are likely to have significant relevance to helping some of our most vulnerable residents, encouraging healthier lives and helping to support improved prospects for our children and young people. With regard to creating proud places to live in RCT, improving air quality is a potential priority alongside with making the most of green infrastructure and capitalising upon major sustainable transport regeneration.

15. CONCLUSION

- 15.1 This supporting report provides information relevant to what actions are available to improve air quality in RCT and its contents should be considered as part of the main Discussion Paper - Work Programme for Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group.

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Appendix 1

In the below Tables: -

* = slight importance, ** = moderate importance, *** = substantial importance, **** = major importance

↑ = upward trend/increase in emission, ↓ = downward trend/decrease in emission

Table A: Details on each Air Quality Management Area within Rhondda Cynon Taf

Area	AQMA	No. of Properties	HAP-RAP Priority	NAPPA	Improvement Needed	5 year Trend ²⁰	Traffic Volume	Buses	HGVs	Road Incline	Network Congestion	Road Narrowness	Controlled Traffic	Pedestrian Crossing	Parked Vehicles	Loading Vehicles	In-road Bus Stop	Traffic Calming	Street Canyon	Steep Sided Valley	Dwellings Near Road
Rhondda	Cymer	146	✓	✓	***	↑	**	**		**	**	**	*	**	**				**		**
	Ferndale	102	✓	✓	***	↔	**	**			**		*	**	**				**	**	*
	Llwynypia	28	✓	✓	**	↓	**	**				**							**	*	*
	Tonyrefail	20			*	↔	*	*		**	**	**			**		*		**	*	*
	Tylorstown	65	✓	✓	***	↓	**	**		*	**	**	*	**	**		**		**	**	**
Cynon	Aberdare	270			*	↓	**					**	*								
	Mountain Ash	57	✓		***	↔	**	*	*	*		**	*						**	*	**
Taf	Broadway ²¹	259			**	↓	**					**					*				
	Church Village	21			**	↓	**					**				*			**		
	Cilfynydd	173		✓	***	↔	**		*		*			*						*	
	Llanharan	7			*	↓	**				**	**							**		*
	Mwynydy	1		✓	**	↓	**		*		*	**	**								
	Nantgarw	8			**	↓	**		*	**		**	**							*	

²⁰ As air quality can fluctuate from year to year, a medium term consideration of the trend is necessary, this can also mean that interventions to improve air quality (e.g. A470 speed restrictions) can take some time before monitoring data robustly demonstrates any local effect.

²¹ The Broadway AQMA is to be amended to reduce its size to approximately 156 properties.

Nightingales Bush	11	✓	** **	↑	** ** **		*		** **										
Pontypridd	84	✓	** **	↑	** **	**			*	** **	*								
Treforest	8	✓	*	↓ ↓	** ** **		*		*										*

Table B: List of practical improvement actions

Actions that are considered more viable are highlighted in **bold**, actions that have already been completed are marked with a **C**

Action Type	Action	Air Quality Impact			Other Impact				Cost	Cost Effectiveness		Further Consideration in relation to AQ
		AQMA	Within Area of Concern	Regional	Noise	Climate change	Economic	PSB Priorities		In AQMA	Regionally	
New & Major Reconfiguration of Roads	Church Village – A473 Relief Rd	Church Village	** *	** *	↓ ↓	↑ ↑	** *		** *	*	**	C
	Porth Rhondda Fawr Lower Relief Rd	N/A	** *	** *	↓ ↓	↑ ↑	** *	*	** *	*	*	C
	Llanharan Bypass	Llanharan	** *	*	↓ ↓	↑ ↑	**		** *	*	*	** *
	Mt Ash Cross-Valley Link	Mt Ash	**	**	↓	↑	**		** *	*	*	**
	Pontypridd Partial Pedestrianisation	Pontypridd	**	*	↓ ↓	↓			*	**		C
	Ely Valley Rd Dualling	N/A		**	↓	↑	**		** *	*	*	*
	Llwydcoed – Heads of the Valley Reconfiguration	N/A		*	↓	↑	**		** *		*	*
	Treorchy Relief Rd	N/A	*	**	↓	↑	*		** *		*	*
Traffic Management Improvement	Cardiff Rd Signal Improvement reduce congestion along Cardiff Rd northbound	Aberdare	*	*					*	**		C

Oxford St Signal Improvement reduce congestion along Oxford St northbound (no effect to New Rd)	Mt Ash	*	*			*	*	**		C
Broadway North Signal Improvement & Increased Junction Capacity (right-turn from Broadway North) reduce congestion along Broadway northbound	Broadway	*	*			*	*	**		C
Partridge Rd Jct Signal Improvement reduce congestion along Partridge Rd southbound	Llwynypia	*	*			*	*	**		** *
Mill St Signal Improvement reduce congestion along Mill St northbound	Tonyrefail	*	*			*	*	**		**
Dyffryn Terrace Signal Improvement reduce congestion along Dyffryn Tce westbound	Church Village	*	*			*	*	**		**
Off-Road Bus Stops reduce disruption to traffic flow within the area caused by bus waiting	Church Village Tonyrefail Tylorstown	**	*	↑	↓	*	**	**		**

Flow Controls	A470 Partial Speed Limit Reduction & Preserving Existing Green Barriers Reducing speed limit directly reduces traffic emissions with existing green barriers providing a physical break from air pollution (led by Welsh Government).	Broadway Cilfynydd Nightingales B. Pontypridd Treforest	** *	**	↓↓	↓↓ ↓	*		**	**	**	C
	Designated Off-Street Parking Reducing need for on-street parking and potential associated impediment to traffic flow	Cymmer Ferndale Tonyrefail Tylorstown	**	*		↑	*	*	** *	*	*	**
	Increased Parking Enforcement Restricting parking with associated enforcement at critical locations which can otherwise impede traffic flow	Cymmer Ferndale Tonyrefail Tylorstown	**	*	↓	↓	*	*	*	**	**	** *
Linked Transportation	Llanharan Park & Ride	Llanharan	*	**	↓↓	↓↓	**	*	*	*	*	C
	Abercynon Park & Ride	Cilfynydd Nightingales B. Treforest	*	**	↓↓	↓↓	**	*	**	*	**	C
	Taffs Well Park & Ride			**	↓↓	↓↓	**	*	*		*	C
	Rhondda Park & Ride	Llwynypia	*	**	↓↓	↓↓	**	*	**	*	**	**
Public Transport	South Wales Metro	Aberdare Broadway Cilfynydd Llwynypia Miskin Mt Ash Nantgarw Pontypridd Treforest	**	** *	↓↓ ↓	↓↓ ↓	** *	*	** *	*	**	** *
	Valley Lines Electrification	Broadway Pontypridd	*	**	↓↓ ↓	↓↓ ↓	** *	*	** *	*	**	**

	<p>Coordinated Train & Bus Journeys By enabling linked up public transport the effective travel range and hence usability may increase</p>	All	**	**	↓↓↓ ↓	↓↓↓ ↓	** *	* *	**	**	**	**	** *
	<p>Combined Public Transport Ticketing Combined ticketing options can reduce complexity to users</p>	All	**	**	↓↓↓ ↓	↓↓↓ ↓	** *	* *	**	**	**	**	** *
Active Travel	<p>Cycle lanes Increasing demarcated cycle lane provision to improve usability</p>	Aberdare Broadway Cymmer Ferndale Llanharan Llwynypia Mountain Ash Church Village Pontypridd Tonyrefail Tylorstown	*	**	↓↓↓	↓↓↓	*	* *	** *	*	**	**	**
	<p>School Routes Improvements Improvement to designated school active travel routes to improve usability and encourage use</p>	Aberdare Broadway Cymmer Ferndale Llanharan Llwynypia Mountain Ash Church Village Pontypridd Tonyrefail Tylorstown	**	**	↓↓↓	↓↓↓	*	* *	**	**	**	**	** *
	<p>Short Trip Active Travel Support Using innovative information technology and associated infrastructure to offer short term bicycle hire to support spontaneous travel choices.</p>	All	*	**	↓	↓	*	* *	**	*	**	**	**

Emission Controls	Taxi Emission Standards Cross-board licensing requirements stipulating an enhanced emission standard for the fleet	All	*	**	↓↓	↓↓↓ ↓	**	*	** *	*	*	** *
	School Transport Standards Contract requirements stipulating an enhanced emission standard for the fleet	All	**	** *	↓↓	↓↓↓ ↓	**	*	** *	**	**	** *
	RCT Fleet Standards Procurement rules stipulating an enhanced emission standard for the fleet	All	**	**	↓↓	↓↓↓ ↓	**	*	** *	**	**	** *
	Low Emission Zone Designating a geographical area (normally a town centre) that only a vehicle (or class of vehicles) meeting a specified emission standard can enter	Aberdare Pontypridd	**	*	↓↓	↓↓↓ ↓	*	*	** *	*	*	*
Indirect	Electric Vehicle Charging Installing or supporting the installation of wide-scale public or targeted charging points	All	** *	** *	↓↓↓ ↓	↓↓↓ ↓	**	* *	** *	*	** *	** *
	Green Infrastructure Using carefully designed trees and hedge planting to mitigate the flow of air pollution from a source to a relevant population	Aberdare Broadway Church Village Cilfynydd Mwyndy Nantgarw Pontypridd	**	** *	↓	↓↓↓ ↓	**	*	**	**	**	** *

Engineered	Hard Engineered Barriers Using solid barriers (such as acoustic barriers) to mitigate the flow of air pollution from a source to a relevant population	Cilfynydd Mwyndy Nantgarw Nightingales Bush Pontypridd Treforest	**	*	↓ ↓				** *	**	*	*	
	Behavioural	Travel Information Providing travel information to enable the public to make informed public transport choices	All	*	**			**	* *	*	**	** *	** *
		Staff Inducement LA workplace schemes that encourage travel planning or the uptake of active travel options	All	*	*	↓	↓ ↓	*	*	*	*	*	**
		School Engagement Improving awareness of the current situation amongst the young and the choices that can be made to improve things	All	*	*	↓	↓	*	*	*	*	*	**
		Clean Air Day Events Targeted events (centred around June) to reinforce the national messaging around Clean Air day	All	*	*	↓	↓	*	*	*	*	*	**
Domestic Heating Inducement Targeting grant aid to enable solid fuel only users to adopt cleaner alternatives	All	*	**		↓ ↓	**		** *	*	*	*		

	Development Control Adopting planning policies that places sustainable development and the 'agent of change' principles firmly within the LDP	All	*	**	↓↓	↓↓	**	**	*	**	**
Reactive	Relocation of Population Removing, possibly via CPO, those members of the public that reside within the smaller AQMAs	Llanharan Mwyndy Nantgarw Nightingales B. Treforest	** *		↓			** *	**		*
	Do Nothing	All	*	*				*	*	*	*

Table C: Potentially viable actions that could deliver air quality improvement

No.	Deliverability	Action	Area	Impact					Aligned with PSB Priority	Likelihood Without Prioritisation
				AQMA	Regional AQ	Noise	Climate Change	Financial		
1	Near Term Deliverable	Traffic Light Signal Improvements Traffic management (especially of road junctions) can result in local traffic congestion which in turn can result in locally elevated levels of air pollution. The Church Village, Llwynypia and Tonyrefail are likely to be affected by existing light controlled traffic management measures that could have the potential to be modified or upgraded to either allow more efficient management or to benefit the worst case area of the AQMA at potential slight detriment to elsewhere.	Rhonda Taff	*	*	-	-	*	-	*
2	Near Term Deliverable	Increased Parking Enforcement Illegally parked cars along	Rhonda	**	*	↓	↓	*	-	*

		<p>narrow carriageway roads can lead to significant short-term congestion when traffic cannot smoothly pass the temporary obstruction. Cymmer, Ferndale, Tonyrefail and Tylorstown have, to some degree, parking restrictions to prevent impediment. To maintain their relevance it is necessary to enforce the restrictions. Consider possible targeted enforcement actions in these areas (potentially at the expense of enforcement elsewhere).</p>								
3	Near Term Deliverable	<p>Travel Information Providing readily digestible travel information (e.g. public transport area options leaflet) can improve awareness and help the public pick sustainable travel options. Compiling and dissemination of information can be a useful element in helping to improve uptake.</p>	RCT	*	**	↓	↓	*	*	**

4	Near Term Deliverable	<p>School Engagement Future change is most likely to be brought about by today's young people, informing young people at an early stage of the relevance of air quality and its part in the environment can not only bring about change in the present but also help make the change sustainable for the future. School engagement could include incorporating local environmental information (i.e. air quality) into the current syllabus, advancing</p>	RCT	*	*	↓	↓	*	-	*
5	Near Term Deliverable	<p>Development Control Policies Air Quality can be dramatically affected by future development, likewise future development can play both a direct and supportive role in advancing local air quality management. Placing air quality and noise within LDP policy and consideration of specific</p>	RCT	*	**	↓↓	↓↓	**	-	*

		Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) could help safeguard current improvements and deliver sustainable future communities.								
6	Near Term Deliverable	Clean Air Day Events Delivering a series of events in associated with the nationally planned Clean Air Day in June. Events could comprise of a range of actions including supportive press release and signposting to national or regional events, ULEV demonstrations, school/community engagement, street party takeover or no-car day, etc. High profile events (no-car days) tend to have a greater effect in larger urban areas and may not be appreciated/practical for all members of the community.	RCT	*	*	↓	↓	*	-	*
7	Medium Term Possible	Llanharan Bypass New road infrastructure that bypasses the centre of Llanharan (the	Taf	** *	*	↓↓	-	** *	-	***

		location of the AQMA). The new road will be designed in accordance with modern practices so as to minimise congestion and maintain where possible distances from existing residences. It is likely the vast majority traversing the existing Bridgend Road will be displaced onto the new Bypass dramatically reduced the local sources of air pollution. Active travel routes and links will be incorporated in the design.								
8	Medium Term Possible	Off-Road Bus Stops Busses stopping along narrow carriageway roads can lead to significant short-term congestion when traffic cannot pass the temporary obstruction (this can be most observed for projected bus stops). Church Village, Tonyrefail and most notably Tylorstown have current bus stops that can impede traffic flow. By moving	Rhonda Taff	**	*	↑	↓	**	-	*

		<p>the bus stop into an engineered lay-by or less obstructed area or re-designating nearby parking to allow the bus to move out of the flow of traffic this may reduce congestions.</p> <p>However, due to local urban layout or service requirements it may not be possible to deliver this action</p>								
9	Medium Term Possible	<p>South Wales Metro</p> <p>A regional scheme to deliver substantive sustainable public transport options across several strategic corridors within RCT.</p>	RCT	**	** *	↓↓↓ ↓	↓↓↓ ↓	***	*	***
10	Medium Term Possible	<p>School Routes Improvements</p> <p>The likelihood of use of active travel routes can rely upon a number of factors, including distance, facilities, awareness and users perception. It may be possible for a number of improvements (surfacing, lighting, signposting, bike storage, awareness raising, walking-bus assistance,</p>	RCT	**	**	↓↓	↓↓	**	*	*

		etc) to be considered which could reduce current dependence on short distance private transport.								
11	Medium Term Possible	Short Trip Active Travel Support Using innovative information technology and associated infrastructure to offer short term bicycle hire to support spontaneous travel choices, for instance NextBike in Cardiff. This could be designed to encourage mixed active travel and public transport options.	RCT	*	**	↓	↓	**	**	*
12	Medium Term Possible	Staff Inducement Large employers (like RCT) can play an important part in incentivising their staff to pick sustainable travel options during the commute. This could include travel planning, car share, bike to work, etc)	RCT	*	*	↓	↓↓	*	-	**
13	Aspirational	Designated Off-Street Parking Legally parked cars along narrow carriageway roads can lead to significant long-	Rhonda	**	*	-	↑	***	*	*

	<p>term congestion when traffic cannot smoothly pass the frequent obstruction. Cymmer, Ferndale, Tonyrefail and Tylorstown have parking arrangements that can impede traffic flow. Due to urban layout, local residents may have no option but to park on the road. By creating a designated space to enable off-street parking in coordination with restructuring current local parking provisions it may be possible to remove the obstruction. Future proofing could enable this provision to include EV charging points bringing this vital future technology to communities that may otherwise experience significant role-out challenges. As free space is at a premium it may be the case that spatial repurposing will be necessary, this could be targeted at under</p>								
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		utilised land use (long term empty properties) but may be limited by the need to ensure community cohesion.								
14	Aspirational	Coordinated Train & Bus Journeys The linking of bus and train journeys can significantly improve the desirability and likelihood of use of public transport options. This could be particularly beneficial for areas where train services have been withdrawn in the past. Would likely require multi-level engagement (LA cannot deliver in isolation).	RCT	**	**	↓↓↓ ↓	↓↓↓ ↓	**	*	**
15	Aspirational	Combined Public Transport Ticketing Single ticketing could significantly improve the desirability and likelihood of use of public transport options by reducing fare complexity and service uncertainty.	RCT	**	**	↓↓↓ ↓	↓↓↓ ↓	**	*	**
16	Aspirational	Taxi Emission Standards Locally licensed taxi and private	RCT	*	**	↓↓↓	↓↓↓ ↓	**(* *)	*	***

		<p>hire vehicles can comprise an important part of the local fleet, especially in urban hubs. Most operators may be able to make use of LEV technology, albeit current fleet options and costs may not encourage early uptake. New licensing policy could enable the early adoption of LEV technology and also support wider acceptance of LEV technology. However, mandating adoption could bring forward financial implications, at least in the short-term, for operators. It may be necessary to coordinate any intervention with actions to improve local charging infrastructure, reduce capital barriers and consistency across other licensing authorities to maintain a functional market.</p>								
17	Aspirational	<p>School Transport Standards Bus transport can significantly</p>	RCT	**	** *	↓↓	↓↓↓ ↓	***	-	*

	<p>contribute to elevated levels of air pollution with improvements to the fleet may have a disproportionately better effect on local air pollution. Although the public bus fleet is of a relatively modern standard (Euro V and above), it can take some time (end of vehicle life) for similar standards to be adopted by the dedicated school bus transport fleet. Contracting of service provisions could look to set fleet emission standards that would potentially not otherwise be achieved in the quickest possible timeframe. It is likely such action would require premium payments and could have significant short term consequences to current providers (that it may become WG policy for LEV bus transport to be adopted by 2028).</p>								
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18	Aspirational	<p>RCT Fleet Standards The LA makes use of a large dedicated mixed fleet, some of which could make use of LEV technology (this would require both vehicle and infrastructure changes). New procurement rules could be considered that prioritises future LEV adoption (if suitable infrastructure is available). Not only could this have a direct improvement it could also demonstrate the option to other large fleet operators (UHB) and help establish local charging infrastructure.</p>	RCT	**	**	↓↓	↓↓↓	***	-	**
18	Aspirational	<p>Electric Vehicle Charging LEV (preferably EV) are considered a vital component in delivering sustainable low polluting future transport. It is likely that one factor in the adoption of LEVs is the availability of charging infrastructure. It is also the case that some areas of RCT may prove more</p>	RCT	** *	** *	↓↓↓ ↓	↓↓↓ ↓	***	-	*

		challenging, due to urban layout and deprivation, in technology role out. Targeted public intervention to establish a charging network may help encourage uptake.								
19	Aspirational	Green Infrastructure Although local green infrastructure is unlikely to be of a scale to directly affect air pollution production within RCT. It can be potentially used, in very carefully considered scenarios (inappropriate use could make matter worse), for instance to mitigate the flow of air pollution and protect local residents or to provide areas where the public can easily access that that are markedly lower in air pollution when compared to the locality. For instance, the A470, in part, observes benefit from existing green infrastructure separating the local community from this major source of	RCT	**	** *	↓	↓↓ ↓	**	-	*

		<p>Nitrogen Dioxide. It is possible that certain places (e.g Ysgol Evan James (Pontypridd), Parclewis (Broadway), Cymmer Jnr. (Cymmer)) could benefit from "green walls" which create a barrier between a road and nearby people. The preservation and improvement of potential 'tranquil spaces' (eg Aberdare Park, Ynysangharad Park) can enable the public to 'escape' everyday air pollution exposure. The use of green infrastructure to reduce power usage at buildings can also help to reduce the sources of some local air pollution</p>							
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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP

28TH JANUARY 2020

**CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT WILDFLOWER GRASS MANAGEMENT
POLICY FOR RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, PROSPERITY, DEVELOPMENT &
FRONTLINE SERVICES AND THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH,
PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES DISCUSSION WITH THE
CABINET'S CLIMATE CHANGE CHAMPION (COUNCILLOR RHYS LEWIS)**

Author: Elizabeth Dean, Environment Planner – 01443 562242

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to consult the Steering Group on the draft Wildflower Grass Management Policy for Rhondda Cynon Taf.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Steering Group:

- 2.1 Comment on the draft Wildflower Grass Management Policy, and
- 2.2 That the feedback and comments of the Climate Control Cabinet Steering Group are reported to Cabinet to inform their decision with regard to the policy.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Land management has significant climate change and biodiversity impacts. The grassland management policy seeks to address these, whilst continuing to meet the Council's Corporate priorities.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Two earlier reports (2015 and 2017) have been considered by Scrutiny committee regarding wildflower grass management and pollinators. For a number of years, grassland management pilots have been underway on a limited number of sites in parks, on road verges and key countryside sites. These pilots have enabled the Council to explore the issues, to test sustainability, to monitor the biodiversity impact and inform the development of this draft Wildflower Grass Management Policy.

- 4.2 In recent years, the loss of wildflower grassland habitats and the pollinating insects they support has become an issue of public concern. Publically owned grasslands and grass verges have significant potential as reservoirs of wildflower rich habitat that can contribute to reconnecting and restoring grassland biodiversity. As these areas are in public view, they also offer opportunities for awareness raising, local community support and action. A number of the pilot projects were suggested by residents or Councillors and some local communities helped to develop 'Grab a Rake' (see Appendix 2).
- 4.3 The management of Council owned land for biodiversity has been an important priority within 'Action for Nature: the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf'. In recent years, grassland management has also been recognised in the actions undertaken to meet the Council's Biodiversity Duty under S6. Environment (Wales) Act 2016. Cross departmental working is fundamental to this, in particular as grass cutting has been transferred from Parks and Countryside to Streetcare.
- 4.4 It is important to appreciate that a wildflower management approach is not about abandonment. Active management is required for native wildflowers and their pollinators to thrive. Grass is left uncut until the flowers have set seed but later in the year it is cut and the grass is collected into 'habitat piles'. The collection of the cuttings is an essential part of the process. It removes nutrients, lowers the soil fertility and prevents a 'thatch' of dead grass inhibiting wildflower seed growth. Over time, the percentage of grass decreases and the percentage of wildflowers will increase. On larger sites, conservation grazing may be the most sustainable option.
- 4.5 In Rhondda Cynon Taf, we are very fortunate to have a wide range of native wildflowers growing naturally in our fields, verges and woodlands. All these plants are perfectly adapted to the soil, climate and habitat and are part of the 'ecosystem' providing food not only for pollinators but for many insects and other animals. This is the foundation of our unique biodiversity. Sadly, this has been lost in some other parts of the UK.
- 4.6 The proposed Rhondda Cynon Taf grassland and grass-verge biodiversity management policy is **'to increase the area and extent of wildflower rich grassland habitat in the County Borough in support of the Council's Biodiversity Duty and 'Action for Nature: the Local Biodiversity Action Plan'**.

The key principles in support of the policy are:

- To identify sites where there are no over-riding health and safety constraints to changed grassland management.
- To ensure changes in grass and grass-verge management are broadly supported by local people.
- To pick sites with the highest potential for biodiversity improvement. The measure of potential includes consideration of:
 - a) Existing wildflower composition;
 - b) Larger sites being better than small ones;
 - c) Sites which help to create habitat connectivity within the local landscape;
 - d) Sites which help 'fill in' gaps in the network of sites across the County Borough.
- To pick sites where appropriate vehicle access is available.
- To ensure sites have necessary 'eco-pile' composting capacity.
- Where appropriate, to establish conservation grazing sites on large sites.
- Integrate management with Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and other invasive plant control.
- Develop site interpretation at a scale and form appropriate to the site and location, and co-ordinate via the Council web site using the 'brimstone butterfly' emblem as the project logo.
- Where appropriate, link local communities and interest groups with site management for awareness raising, training, the recording of wildflowers and insects and to promote 'Grab a Rake' community raking.
- On 'cut and collect' sites, visibility splays and access paths will continue to be cut more regularly.
- In some cases not all the wildflower grass needs to be cut and collected each year. Staggered biennial cutting can ensure even better pollinating insect habitat and that some wildflower seeds are available to seed eating birds as winter food.
- Even grassland that initially has few wildflowers can quickly diversify with biodiversity management, however in these cases the floristic improvements can be accelerated by planting spring bulbs. These will provide an instant reaction to new management and the 'hay meadow' management will ensure the plants can photosynthesize after flowering and develop strong bulbs for flowering the next spring.

- Map, record and report progress through the Biodiversity Duty and the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 4.7 The draft Policy on Wildflower Grass Management is set out in Appendix 1. In 2020, it is proposed that the number of sites in wildflower management will be increased and that website and social media will be utilised to engage with local communities. Local Members, residents and officers have identified a number of suitable sites and it is anticipated that this will continue in subsequent years. If the policy is adopted by the Council, it will provide clear guidelines for the future development of the programme.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no equality or diversity implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

6. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 6.1 The draft policy has been developed in consultation with Council staff who have responsibility and practical expertise in grassland management as well the Council's ecologist. Local residents and Councillors have contributed to the pilot projects, some being actively involved in 'Grab a Rake' to remove cuttings from small sites which are unsuitable for 'cut and collect' machinery.
- 6.2 The future development of the wildflower grass cutting programme will continue to involve local Councillors and residents. Website and social media are proposed to provide a channel for information, awareness raising and involvement.
- 6.3 The views of this Steering Group will make an important contribution and inform the deliberations of Cabinet.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 There are likely to be some minor financial implications associated with this report. The Council's grassland management budget is significant and the changes proposed can largely be accommodated within this. There may be additional costs associated with removing cut material, however this should be balanced but the reduced frequency of cuts on these sites. The pilots have demonstrated that, over time, the volume of cut material decreases as the wildflower percentage increases.
- 7.2 Site signage is likely to be expanded, using the brimstone butterfly emblem, to mark sites in conservation management. The machinery required for 'cut and collect' is different to routine grass cutting and its use requires training for the operatives. The current tracked machine

has a large capacity and is suitable for cutting wet ground outside the routine grass cutting season. The machine and the initial staff training was largely funded by grant aid from Natural Resources Wales. As the programme develops, there will be a need for additional machinery (in particular for smaller sites) for repairs and eventual replacement and for additional staff training.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 The Council has a statutory biodiversity duty under S.6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and general responsibilities with regard to land management under various Acts including Highways legislation.

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

- 9.1 The draft policy on Wildflower Grass Management contributes to the Council's PLACE priority for creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work. It also contributes to 'providing essential services well', 'help people and communities to help themselves' and to 'build a sustainable County Borough' as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2016-2020. The Council is currently undertaking initial discussions with regard to the next Corporate Plan for the period 2020-2024 which is likely to contain further consideration of the climate emergency and biodiversity loss.
- 9.2 The draft policy reflects the five ways of working of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. It has been developed collaboratively, drawing on the skills of practitioners, other local authorities and NRW with the involvement of local residents and Councillors. It is designed to deliver sustainable, long-term benefits and prevent the loss of native wildflowers and the biodiversity that depends on this habitat. The Policy seeks to integrate this approach within the existing grass cutting service, expand the number of sites gradually, learn from experience and share this via social media.
- 9.3 The draft policy relates most closely to the Resilience and Global Responsibility goals of the Act but the extension of the programme more widely across RCT will contribute to the Equality and Cohesive Communities goals. The impact on the Prosperity, Health and Cultural /Welsh Language goals is likely to be positive.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 Members of the Climate Control Cabinet Steering Group are requested to consider the information presented in this report and are invited to comment on the Draft Policy on Wildflower Grass Management

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/EnvironmentalServicesScrutinyCommittee/2015/04/20/Reports/item4actiontosafeguardpollinatinginsectsinrct.pdf>

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/PublicServiceDeliveryCommunitiesandProsperityScrutinyCommittee/2017/12/12/Reports/AgendaItem3TheEnvironmentActWales2015BiodiversityDutyandPollinators.pdf>

Appendix One

A Policy on Wildflower Grass Management

This note sets out the policy position for biodiversity grass verge and open space management in Rhondda Cynon Taf. For a variety of fortunate reasons, highway grass verges, open spaces, parks and school grounds in Rhondda Cynon Taf are often rich in native wildflowers and support 'priority' grassland habitat. In recent years, the loss of wildflower grassland habitats and the pollinating insects they support has become an issue of significant public concern. Strategies to restore grassland biodiversity have been developed and publically owned grasslands and grass verges are increasingly seen as important reservoirs of wildflower rich habitat. A resource which if managed sympathetically, can help to reconnect and restore grassland biodiversity. Being in the public view, these areas also offer excellent opportunities for awareness raising and local community support and action. Wildflower grassland and grass verge management also involves integrated cross department working in support of Action for Nature: the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for RCT and the Council's new Biodiversity Duty.

It is important to recognise that wildflower management is not abandonment of land. Wildflowers need management to thrive and wildflower grasslands are traditionally maintained either by cutting or grazing. In very simple terms, biodiversity management requires grass to be left uncut in the spring and summer in order for flowers to 'flower and seed' , and only then are cut, with all 'arising' collected. The collection of the cut grass is essential, because in doing so it removes nutrients from the soil which has the dual impact of reducing grass growth and increasing wildflower diversity and abundance. Collection also ensures that dead grass isn't allowed to form a mulch which can smother the wildflowers beneath. On grasslands where cut material is not collected, wildflowers will not flourish. Indeed changes of management which see grasslands cut once or twice a year but with the cuttings left is proving worse for wildflower diversity than traditional regular grass cutting. Again, it is important to re-iterate that wildflower grassland management is not abandonment.

Once collected the cut material can often be composted on site in special 'eco-piles', which act as hibernation areas and refuges for reptiles. Where there is no space, the cut material can be removed for composting elsewhere. The removal of cut material is essential. It is also the most difficult element of wildflower management and it is one of the first questions that need to be considered when changing management to a wildflower regime. In most cases cut and collection will be by machine, however on some small sites community raking up of cut grass through the 'grab a rake' initiative with the green bagging of cut grass for waste collection is a viable option. On larger sites, where opportunities arise, conservation grazing is a very effective wildflower management tool. RCT Council runs a number of conservation grazing sites.

On steep banks collection of cut grass by machine is impossible. Here gravity assists, as cut grass 'works down' to the bottom of banks, leaving at least the upper parts wildflower rich. In such circumstances, where community volunteer help is available, hand raking can help the bottom of the bank.

The RCT grass and grass-verge biodiversity management policy is **'to increase the area and extent of wildflower rich grassland habitat in the County Borough in support of the Council's Biodiversity Duty and 'Action for Nature: the Local Biodiversity Action Plan'**.

Key principles in support of the policy include:

1. To identify sites where there are no over-riding health and safety constraints to changed grassland management.
2. To ensure changes in grass and grass-verge management are broadly supported by local people.
3. To pick sites with the highest potential for biodiversity improvement. The measure of potential includes consideration of:
 - a) Existing wildflower composition;
 - b) Larger sites being better than small ones;
 - c) Sites which help to create habitat connectivity within the local landscape;
 - d) Sites which help 'fill in' gaps in the network of sites across the County Borough.
4. To pick sites where appropriate vehicle access is available.
5. To ensure sites have necessary 'eco-pile' composting capacity.
6. Where appropriate to establish conservation grazing sites on large sites.
7. Integrate management with Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and other invasive plant control.
8. Develop site interpretation at a scale and form appropriate to the site and location, and co-ordinate via the Council web site using the 'brimstone butterfly' emblem as the project logo.
9. Where appropriate link local communities and interest groups with site management for awareness raising, training, the recording of wildflowers and insects and to promote 'Grab a Rake' community raking.
10. On 'cut and collect' sites, visibility splays and access paths will continue to be cut more regularly.
11. In some cases not all the wildflower grass needs to be cut and collected each year. Staggered biennial cutting can ensure even better pollinating insect habitat and that some wildflower seeds are available to seed eating birds as winter food.

12. Even grassland which initially have few wildflowers can quickly diversify with biodiversity management, however in these cases the floristic improvements can be accelerated by planting spring bulb. These will provide an instant reaction to new management and the 'hay meadow' management will ensure the plants can photosynthesize after flowering and develop strong bulbs for flowering the next spring.
13. Map, record and report progress through the Biodiversity Duty and Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Appendix Two

A brief guide to managing grass for Biodiversity

What changes are taking place in terms of grass management?

At present, most of our grass verges and parks are cut regularly (every four weeks or so). However, this does not give a chance for wild flowers to flower and go to seed as the grass is cut quite short. Less wild flowers mean that there is less food for insects and in turn, less insects mean less food for other animals. In addition, when we cut the grass, some of the clippings are left on the surface; they then get washed into the grass by rain, people walking through etc. These clippings then sit at the surface of the ground, suppress some of the light which stop wild flowers from coming up and as the clippings break down, they feed the grass. This improves the growing conditions for the grass so the grass gets stronger and the wild flowers cannot compete with it. It is important to note that for wild flowers to grow successfully, they need to grow on poor soils. By cutting the grass the way we do, we are encouraging more grass and less flowers; therefore, less biodiversity.

To change this trend, we have identified areas in some parks, grass verges and cemeteries where we could let the grass grow for a longer period of time. This will help wild flowers to complete their life cycle (namely: come up, flower and go to seed) before being cut and collected. By doing this, over time, we will see less grass and more wild flowers coming through. More wild flowers means more pollen and nectar for insects which means that they are more likely to breed and increase their numbers.

What is 'Grab your Rake'?

'Grab your Rake' is a campaign devised to involve the local community in the management of some of our grass verges left for biodiversity.

It is aimed at anyone who would like to spend a couple of hours outdoors to help us rake an area after it has been strimmed; pile up the clippings and bag them ready to be recycled/ composted. On some sites, we may be able to create habitat piles for other animals such as reptiles which are also species under threat.

What tools/ equipment is required?

The only things needed are: a rake and a pair of gloves.

Taking Health and Safety into consideration

The areas selected under the 'Grab your Rake' campaign may be located near busy roads. It is therefore important to brief people beforehand and to ensure the following:

- **Remind individuals to be mindful of the nearby road and their positioning when working**
- **Signs should be on site to forewarn drivers**
- **Cones may be used to create a safety buffer away between the road and the work area should this be needed**
- **When using a rake, rake towards you – not away from you. This will reduce the amount of physical stress on the body**
- **Safe distances should be maintained when working so as to prevent hitting each other with tools**
- **Gloves should be worn at all times especially when bagging the clippings**
- **Bags should not be overfilled so as to cause injury when lifting. Remind individuals to lift with their knees not with their back – good manual handling technique**
- **Remember to wash hands before eating**

Other community activities

As the 'Grab your Rake' campaign will take place primarily over late summer and early autumn, we would like to invite the community to help us plant some of those biodiversity areas with bulbs or even some devil's bit scabious which is one of the main food source for insects in RCT.

This is a good project to involve young children and teach them about planting bulbs in grass as if they had always been there. This will also provide some colour and interest until the rest of the wild flowers start to come up.

Method of planting daffodils:

The best way to plant daffodils is to lift a patch of turf and scatter the bulbs. Where the bulbs fall is where they to be planted. All of this will give a more natural look once the daffodils are in flower. Make sure however that you leave plenty of space between each bulb so it has space to spread. Before replacing the turf, you need to score the underside of the turf to loosen the soil, replace it and only if possible water the area. As a rule, planting depth should be 3 times the height of the bulb.

Tools required: spade; fork; hand trowel and gloves.

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

13th FEBRUARY 2020

MAKING A DIFFERENCE THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2020-2024

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (COUNCILLOR ANDREW MORGAN)

AUTHOR: Chris Bradshaw: 01443 424026

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to set out a new draft Corporate Plan from 2020 – 2024. The draft Plan:

- Is informed by the priorities of residents, elected Members and staff through a comprehensive consultation over a 12 week period to 17th January 2020;
- Provides a vision for the County Borough in 2024, and sets out the Council's priorities and objectives it will focus upon over the following four years.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider and challenge the draft Corporate Plan;
- 2.2 Note the feedback from the consultation process.
- 2.3 Subject to any changes required by Cabinet, present the draft Corporate Plan to Council at its meeting on 4th March 2020.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is a key element of effective strategic and financial management for the Council to put in place a Corporate Plan to ensure that it:

- Is well placed to meet future challenges, particularly in the context of cuts to local authority funding, demographic changes in the demand for services and legislation changes;
- Has a clear strategy and set of priorities for future years; and

- Can use this Plan to allocate resources and ensure action plans are in place to deliver the agreed priorities.

4. **THE CORPORATE PLAN**

4.1 The draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024 set out in Appendix A seeks to set the overall direction for the Council over the coming four years, describing its vision, purpose and ambition as local authority for the County Borough.

4.2 The Council's proposed vision is:

“To be the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy, and prosperous”.

4.3 The Council's proposed purpose and the reason why it exists is: ***“To provide strong community leadership and create the environment for people and businesses to be independent, healthy and prosperous”.***

4.4 It is proposed that the Council is focused on the following three priorities:

1. Ensuring **People: are independent, healthy and successful;**
2. Creating **Places: where people are proud to live, work and play;**
3. Enabling **Prosperity: creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.**

4.5 The new draft Corporate Plan will be a key part of the Council's budget and business planning process, and therefore it is essential that the draft Corporate Plan takes into account the fact that Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and the wider public sector continue to face significant financial challenges. Despite significant reductions to Government spending since 2010 and a return to economic growth, the financial environment for the Council, the wider public sector, and residents continues to be challenging. The position can be summarised as follows:

- Despite the new UK Government increasing its spending commitment for public services, for the first time for many years, pay and pensions costs are rising quickly. This negates the majority of the benefit of the increase in public sector funding.
- It is likely that over the next three years further spending cuts will be required, as the UK budget deficit still stands at around £40 billion or 2% of national GDP meaning that some form of austerity will continue.
- Increasing pressure on services: increasing demand on services is driven by a changing population. Rhondda Cynon Taf's population is

increasing but health and social services in particular are facing acute challenges due to the growth in older cohorts, as people live for longer.

- Wider financial pressure on households: from energy bills, housing costs, wage restraint, and benefit reforms.
- Increasing public expectations in terms of responding to climate change and the need to act, will require the Council to invest in ensuring its day to day activities become Carbon Neutral. This means that the Council must plan for the fact that this additional cost will not be met from simply doing more of what it is currently doing, but from making other difficult choices on what it does or does not provide.

4.6 Knowing that the Council continues to face significant financial challenges in the years ahead, it has a responsibility to develop and agree a plan for meeting the challenge.

4.7 Nevertheless, the economy locally is now growing, with the Cardiff Capital City Region one of the fastest growing areas outside of London. This creates opportunities for the Council; for residents; and for business. In Rhondda Cynon Taf, the benefits are already being seen through reduced unemployment, falling numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals, with more people on benefits moving into work.

4.8 The benefits of the new South Wales Metro should have a significant positive economic and social impact on many communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf, attracting more people and businesses to live and work in the County Borough.

5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Areas of investment identified in the plan, as well as the consideration of tough decisions ahead, will be subject to Equalities Impact Assessments as subsequent budget proposals and other strategic decisions are brought forward during the course of the Plan.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the first draft of the new Corporate Plan on 23rd September 2019. There was a high level of debate amongst the Members which resulted in the draft Corporate Plan being amended to include a number of actions to be included within a number of the priority areas.

6.2 The draft Corporate Plan has been subject to a comprehensive community consultation exercise for 12 weeks from the 25th October 2019 to the 17th January 2020. The feedback from the consultation is set out in Appendix B. Council staff were also encouraged to feedback their thoughts on the draft Corporate Plan via the Council's intranet site.

- 6.3 The feedback from the consultation process was particularly positive with a clear mandate supporting the Council's Vision and the three priorities.
- 6.4 Consultees came forward with a number of excellent suggestions in respect of the actions they felt the Council should focus on operationally, such as local procurement, local employment, improvement in pay and conditions and improving our internal systems and processes. The Council already focuses on these issues through the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and our HR Strategy, where we prioritise:
- Digitalisation
 - Commercialisation
 - Early Intervention and Prevention
 - Independence
 - Efficient and Effective Organisation.
- 6.5 Also the Council is a Foundation Living Wage Employer and each year we recruit approximately 50 apprentices and graduates from local colleges and universities.
- 6.6 The other key area of concern for residents was the environment and the need for a sense of urgency in respect of responding to Climate Change. The draft Corporate Plan includes a number of key actions to respond to Climate Change and over the next four years, we will see significant progress and actions being implemented as a result of the positive intervention of the Cabinet Climate Change Steering Group.
- 6.7 As a result of the feedback received, the draft Corporate Plan has had some drafting changes to incorporate the salient points raised.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 The draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024 will be set within the context of the budget setting process for 2020/21. Any investments set out in the Plan will be considered in the 2020/21 budget and subsequent Medium Term Financial proposals to ensure that spending priorities are aligned, where appropriate, with the Plan.

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Cabinet has responsibility for the overall strategic direction of the Council and for formulating the Corporate Plan.

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

- 9.1 This report proposes a new set of corporate priorities and performance targets which will drive the work of the Council between 2020 and 2024.
- 9.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act focuses on improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act makes public bodies, such as the Council, think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach. This helps us to create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future. To make sure we are all working towards the same vision, the Act puts in place the following seven well-being goals:
1. **A prosperous Wales** - An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.
 2. **A resilient Wales** - A nation which maintains and enhances a bio-diverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).
 3. **A healthier Wales** - A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.
 4. **A more equal Wales** - A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances).
 5. **A Wales of cohesive communities** - Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.
 6. **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language** - A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.
 7. **A globally responsible Wales** - A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.
- 9.3 This draft Corporate Plan's vision, priorities and principles support the seven Well-being Goals. The Act requires the Council to set well-being objectives that maximise its contribution to achieving the well-being goals. In doing so, the Council will be expected to take all reasonable steps to meet those well-being objectives. It is proposed that the Well-

being objectives will be the three priorities set out in the draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024. This will be considered and determined by Council in March 2020.

10 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The Cabinet are recommended to approve the draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024 and present it to full Council for consideration.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Background Papers:

Draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024

Contact Officer

Chris Bradshaw – 01443 424026

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

13th FEBRUARY 2020

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER
OF THE COUNCIL (COUNCILLOR ANDREW MORGAN)**

Item:

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE
THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2020-2024
FOR CONSULTATION**

Background Papers:

Draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024

Officer to contact: Chris Bradshaw 01443 424026

Making A Difference

The Council's Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

A message from the Leader of the Council

Rhondda Cynon Taf is a great place to live, work and play, and despite the continuing public sector austerity, the County Borough has great potential to become more prosperous and successful over the course of the next few years. We have already made a real difference. Over the past four years, the Council has delivered on its first Corporate Plan – The Way Forward 2016-2020, and has invested nearly £400m in priority areas such as:

- £170m - 21st Century Schools;
- £85m - Highways, Transportation and other infrastructure;
- £15m - parks, play areas, leisure centres and outdoor sports facilities; and
- £95m in regeneration of our town centres and community assets.

As we look to the future, we want to build on what we have achieved to date and make sure that every town and community in Rhondda Cynon Taf is a great place to live, work and play.

The pace of change in the world is fast, especially in the technology industry, so it is important that we keep up with the pace of change and make the most of the opportunities that come our way, such as technology that enables independent living. In doing so we will embrace change and be innovative in the way that we deliver services to residents. This new Corporate Plan sets out how we intend to continue to invest for the future.

Like all councils, we are continuing to face a difficult financial challenge. More and more people are needing our services, and there is also an increasing uncertainty about the levels of funding in the future. This means that we have had to make some tough decisions around where we prioritise and spend our resources. It has also presented us with opportunities to be innovative. We have had to think about alternative ways of working and more efficient means of delivering services to ensure that we retain the high standards of provision that residents expect. This includes ensuring that there is robust management of our budgets and our contracts, reducing our management and back office costs and ensuring we deliver value for money to the tax payer.

Careful long-term financial planning is key to ensuring that this approach remains successful. Over the past four years we have had the lowest cumulative increase in Council Tax across Wales and we will seek to ensure that Council Tax continues to be affordable over the next four years. The increases we have introduced are the minimum we need to balance the books and pay for essential services, such as safeguarding our older and younger residents. The budget consultation feedback supports this approach, and there will also be an opportunity to have your say on the level of Council Tax set each year. I am always grateful for the feedback we receive through the annual consultation exercise as it helps to inform us what areas you want to see the Council prioritise for the forthcoming year.

We always listen and look to respond to the outcomes. For 2019/20, the 3.6% rise in Council Tax that the Council approved is less than the 4.45% average increase that residents indicated they would be willing to pay to protect our services and well below the all-Wales average increase of 6.15%.

Despite the challenges, I am remaining ambitious and positive in my outlook for Rhondda Cynon Taf and the people that live and work here. Our plan sets out three main priorities and how we propose to deliver a series of corresponding commitments to achieve these.

Having a clean, pleasant and well-maintained environment remains at the top of the list. We know that efficient recycling and waste collections, welcoming green spaces, clean streets and well-maintained roads are some of the ways we can best support the quality of residents' daily lives. So we will continue to take tough action to tackle environmental crimes such as fly tipping, dog fouling and littering.

As we continue to work to reduce the day-to-day running costs of the Council to make savings, we are investing heavily in the future infrastructure of the County Borough. We have already set aside £170m to invest in building new schools, extra care homes, improvements to our roads and pavements, our green spaces, leisure centres, libraries and community buildings. We have already made good progress in enhancing our town centres to create the environment where businesses flourish and where people want to live, work and visit. Further investment is planned bringing jobs and homes into the town centres and opportunities for leisure and social activities.

The investment in the Council's infrastructure is likely to exceed £400m by the end of the four year period as new schemes come to fruition, and we maximise the benefits of the Welsh Government's investment in the South Wales Metro and Cardiff Capital Region City Deal investments.

Our ambition is for everyone to be as healthy, independent and prosperous as possible throughout their lives. Enabling access to a good education, developing skills and decent employment opportunities are all key priority areas. As we embrace the changes ahead, we remain absolutely committed to ensuring the effective safeguarding of our vulnerable children and adults. This commitment will not change. We will continue to seek to reduce the number of children looked after through early intervention and prevention and look for innovative ways to support our older population.

In the context of reducing budgets and growing demand pressures, the traditional role of the local authority as service deliverer is changing. Working with partners such as the police and health service is essential in tackling the complex and multi-faceted challenges facing our communities and core services. We will also see a different relationship with communities continuing

to emerge – one where we work together and both residents and businesses take a shared responsibility for themselves and the communities they live and work in. We are lucky to have strong business, voluntary, community and religious groups across RCT, and they will continue to play an important role in developing this new dynamic throughout the County Borough.

Our greatest challenge will be to deliver the Council's commitment to being "A net-zero Green House Gas Council by 2030" which is 20 years earlier than the recommendation of the UK Committee on Climate Change. This is a challenge we are taking seriously and we look forward to receiving the support from all local residents and businesses in working together to change the way we live our lives to achieve this aim.

I hope this Corporate Plan helps you to understand more about how the Council is approaching the challenges and opportunities over the next four years, and how we can work together for an even better Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Councillor Andrew Morgan
Leader of the Council

What we want to achieve

The Council's vision is:

“To be the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy, and prosperous.”

The Council's purpose and the reason why it exists is:

“To provide strong community leadership and create the environment for people and businesses to be independent, healthy and prosperous.”

The Council is committed to delivering three main priorities:

- Ensuring **People**: *are independent, healthy and successful;*
- Creating **Places**: *where people are proud to live, work and play;*
- Enabling **Prosperity**: *creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.*

A set of key commitments that we will be focusing on sits underneath each core priority, including the detail of how we intend to deliver this. This doesn't aim to capture all that the Council does, rather it provides a framework to guide us.

The Council's three priorities – and our commitments:

People – Are independent, healthy and successful.

- **Supporting our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life - How we will deliver this:**
 - Opening new Extra Care schemes for people that need additional support to remain living independently;
 - Providing enablement services that help people regain or increase their independence;
 - Using technology to enhance independence and assist with care;
 - Offering support for carers;
 - Providing support and equipment that allows people to stay more independent at home;
 - Commissioning a range of community based provision to enable people to remain actively engaged within their community.
- **Encouraging all residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental wellbeing - How we will deliver this:**

- Delivering new indoor and outdoor sporting facilities and enhancing existing sporting facilities such as changing rooms and outdoor play areas;
 - Ensuring participation in sport and physical activity is accessible and inclusive for all by maintaining low cost, high value provision;
 - Giving residents access to health and wellbeing information and activities through the GP referral schemes, and other health and wellbeing intervention programmes;
 - Increasing levels of engagement and participation in the arts and culture, whilst developing our theatres to become more inclusive and accessible to the whole community;
 - Continue to develop community hubs where residents have the opportunity to meet, socialise and access a range of Council and other services.
- **Integrating health and social care and providing support for those with mental health problems and complex needs – How we will deliver this:**
 - Working with the local Health Board and GPs to provide more health and care services closer to home;
 - Working with the NHS to achieve timely discharge from hospital for patients;
 - Offering, and signposting to prevention support for people to stay active and more independent in the community;
 - Continuing to offer support to working age adults with mental health needs
 - Introducing a social prescribing model for referring people to interventions in the community, including: exercise classes, adult education classes, Digital Fridays, Library reading clubs etc.
- **Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do - How we will deliver this:**
 - Seeking to reduce the number of children looked after through working with families to intervene early where issues arise with the focus on intervention and prevention to keep families safe together;
 - Improving the social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing of children and young people by increasing the range of specialist services available;

- Preventing young people from getting involved in violence, crime, exploitation and anti-social behaviour through a range of cultural, sporting and other forms of early engagement and intervention;
- Being a good corporate parent to children in care and care leavers, and supporting and involving them in securing the most suitable housing, employment, education or training provision;
- Working in partnership with Welsh Government, strive to reduce child poverty, providing services that encourage and build resilience of children and their families.

Places – Where people are proud to live, work and play.

- **Keeping RCT clean through efficient street cleaning services, minimising the amount of waste we send to landfill, achieving our recycling targets through weekly recycling and regular refuse collections, and reducing our carbon footprint – How we will deliver this:**
 - Supporting residents to reduce waste and increase recycling to 80% by working with residents and businesses on initiatives that promote waste minimisation and re-use materials;
 - Investing in technology to increase the amount of waste we recycle and reuse locally;
 - Working with residents, landlords and agents to improve recycling rates across all dwellings;
 - Working with residents and communities to reduce the number of incidents of littering, dog fouling, fly tipping and illegal parking, using enforcement powers as necessary;
 - Procuring a vehicle fleet that is fit for purpose yet has a limited impact on the environment;
 - Creating a circular approach to recycling and reusing waste material such as plastic at every opportunity. This will include developing the Eco Park at Bryn Pica;
 - Eliminating single use plastics and such as coffee cups across schools and other council facilities.
- **Keeping the County Borough moving, including improvements to roads and pavements and public transport, whilst also improving air quality – How we will deliver this:**
 - Continuing to improve the condition of our roads and pavements and investing in our bridges, retaining walls and sustainable flood drainage systems;
 - Encouraging the use of public transport through the development of the South Wales Metro, walking and cycling through an investment in active travel initiatives;

- Working with Welsh Government and the Regional Transport Authority to continue to improve access to public transport and explore opportunities to bringing back disused public transport, such as rail lines, for bus routes and active travel;
 - Exploring opportunities to develop a cycle network to major destinations in the County Borough without impeding main traffic routes;
 - Promoting and investing in the roll out of electric vehicle charging opportunities;
 - Using enforcement to increase compliance and support traffic to move smoothly and safely.
- **Ensuring the County Borough is one of the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion and where residents feel safe – How will we deliver this:**
 - Supporting the voluntary, community and faith sectors to help build active communities, creating the capacity for meeting the needs of residents within their communities;
 - Working with the police and Community Safety Partnership to prevent and deter anti-social behaviour and substance misuse in our towns;
 - Delivering a multi-agency response to all forms of violence and the criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults;
 - Preventing radicalisation and supporting victims of hate crime, including raising awareness.
- **Getting the best out of our parks by looking after and investing in our greenspaces – How we will deliver this:**
 - **Investing in the parks infrastructure, including playgrounds, pavements, seating areas and horticultural facilities, and developing masterplans for our major parks that will deliver significant improvements;**
 - Delivering natural carbon storage solutions such as those provided by trees, peat bogs, marshy grassland and other natural habitats across the County Borough to enhance air quality and reduce the impact of greenhouse gasses;
 - Offering community grants for creating greener space, encouraging community groups to invest in small and medium scale greening projects in urban locations across the County Borough;
 - Exploring opportunities to create and use our own green sustainable energy such as micro hydro-electric schemes which utilise natural river and water course features;

- Bringing cultural and sports events to our parks, such as the National Eisteddfod for Wales in 2022, and Glamorgan County Cricket to Ynysangharad Park to play T20 competitions, investing in the parks infrastructure to hold such significant events.

Prosperity – Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.

- **Investing in our town centres, bringing jobs and homes into our town centres to create vibrant, thriving places people wish to live, work and socialise; - How we will deliver this:**
 - Supporting new businesses to open up in town centres and existing businesses to expand their offer through a wide package of financial support and interventions;
 - Where the private sector is unable to tackle empty or rundown sites and premises in town centres, the Council will proactively acquire specific key strategic sites and, in partnership with Welsh Government, seek to develop suitable town centre solutions;
 - Developing a tourism offer that encourages people to come to the County Borough and includes attractions such as the Rhondda and Abernant Tunnels, the Zip World Experience, Royal Mint Experience, The National Lido for Wales and the Welsh Mining Experience at the Rhondda Heritage Park. We will support businesses to develop a range of complementary services including offering accommodation in our town centres, such as boutique hotels, quality bed and breakfast and AirBNB locations;
 - Continuing to keep town car park charges to a minimum and make it easier for shoppers to visit town centres using public transport or active travel.
 - Supporting local small and medium sized businesses to supply goods and services to the Council and to recruit the best local talent available into a range of roles from apprenticeships and graduates to leadership positions.
- **Delivering major regeneration and transportation schemes, maximising the impact of the new South Wales Metro, to create better places to live and work, whilst protecting and enhancing the County Borough; - How we will deliver this:**
 - The new Local Development Plan will consider a radically different approach to mobility – to create a socially just, zero-carbon mobility plan. This shifts mobility away from the car by eliminating the conditions that make cars necessary. For example, by 2030, we need to ensure that half of all journeys will need to be taken by bus, bike or walking. All remaining journeys will be via electric vehicles.

- Develop town Centre strategies for our principal town centres, which values the uniqueness of each town, whilst building on the benefits of the Metro and including new office accommodation to increase town centre employment, and homes above shops to create footfall in the towns;
 - The delivery of major road schemes such as the dualling of the A4119, the Cross Valley Link, the Llanharan By-Pass and the A465 Cynon Valley link road;
 - An investment in a number of Park and Ride facilities across the County Borough at key strategic Metro sites, including JN34 of the M4;
 - Ensuring all homes and businesses have at least access to superfast connectivity, with all key industrial and commercial hubs having access to ultrafast connectivity;
 - The Council will lead on the master planning of the new settlement at Llanillid and the connectivity with the M4 and existing rail connections;
 - Supporting housing developers to bring forward major housing developments on former brownfield sites, such as former Cwm Coking Works in Beddau and the former Phurnacite Works in Aberaman.
- **Ensuring we have good schools so all children have access to a great education; - How we will deliver this:**
 - Improving pupils' achievement and narrowing the attainment gap;
 - Improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities;
 - Supporting children to have the best start in life and be ready for learning through an improved early years' system and childcare offer;
 - Investing in new and replacement 21st Century Schools, whilst also meeting the demand for Welsh language provision throughout the County Borough;
 - Supporting schools to successfully introduce and embed the new curriculum, raising the standards of educational performance for all pupils;
 - Supporting pupils to understand the world of work and access good careers advice and guidance.
- **Increase the number of quality homes available and affordable to provide greater housing choice for residents; - How we will deliver this:**

- Increase the land supply for new sustainable, low carbon homes through an updated Local Development Plan or Strategic Development Plan from 2021;
 - Ensure that new housing and commercial developments include solar, where feasible, and have the capability to generate, store and use renewable energy onsite;
 - Support small and medium sized house builders to develop new housing through access to the City Deal Housing Investment Fund;
 - Provide a comprehensive self-build homes support service, including mortgages, for local people to build new homes on Council owned sites (“Plot Shop” Scheme);
 - Continue to build Extra Care and specially adapted homes for elderly and vulnerable residents, develop innovative housing solutions for younger people in need, and provide suitable housing solutions for the homeless;
 - Continue to bring back empty properties back into use through a range of interventions and support;
 - Continue to support responsible local landlords and agents to ensure we have a good quality, affordable private rented sector. We will maintain our targeted enforcement approach against bad landlords and unsafe rented housing maximising the Council’s regulatory intervention powers to improve housing conditions.
- **Helping people into work and better paid employment – How we will deliver this:**
 - Working with partners to provide employment support, utilising remaining European Funding;
 - Offering employment schemes and apprenticeships in the Council, on the regeneration sites, and through other Council contractors;
 - Offering specific support to help people find work such as care leavers, people with disabilities and Universal Credit claimants;
 - Promoting apprenticeships across the County Borough, and supporting businesses to make use of the apprenticeship levy.
 - Continue to support working parents back into employment through the Welsh Government’s 30 Hours Childcare offer.

Our Approach

To achieve our vision, to make progress in delivering these priorities and respond to the significant financial challenges we continue to face, the Council has set out below how we will intend to deliver these priorities.

- **Live within our means:**
 - Delivering services that matter most by making decisions to prioritise our limited resources;
 - Providing value for money for the taxpayer and ensuring we are transparent in how we operate, maintaining low Council tax increases compared to other Welsh councils;
 - Taking every opportunity to reduce the Council's running costs;
 - Take the steps to further reduce the Council's carbon footprint to "Net Zero" through a sustainable approach to the procurement of energy, supplies and services;
 - Ensuring Council vehicles, commissioned home to school transport vehicles, bus operators and taxi vehicles are fit for purpose and are as environmentally friendly as possible.

- **Efficient and effective Council:**
 - Managing our finances and contracts robustly;
 - Providing residents and businesses with the assistance they need at the first point of contact and greater access to online services and support;
 - Treating residents equally, with understanding and respect, with all having access to quality services, whether they wish to engage with the Council in English or Welsh.

- **Maximising opportunities:**
 - Taking a commercial approach to generating income, and looking for new opportunities to generate revenue from our assets. This includes generating green energy for use in local buildings and homes;
 - Making use of digital and evolving technology and innovation to help us achieve better outcomes and become more efficient;
 - Capitalising on opportunities from Welsh Government, City Deal, or private sector investment growth and development to boost the local economy, creating local jobs through major initiatives, such as the Metro;

- **Shared responsibility:**
 - Working with residents and the community to share responsibility, helping communities to do more for themselves and give them more control over what they can do to support local people in their communities;

- Focusing on prevention and early help in local communities so residents can live independently for as long as possible;
- Working in partnership with other public sector providers to maximise the impact of our resources on improving public services.

In preparing this Corporate Plan, the Council continues to take account of the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Act focuses on improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. It makes public bodies, such as the Council, think more about the long term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined up approach. This will help us to create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future. To make sure we are all working towards the same vision, the Act puts in place seven national Well-being Goals:

1. A prosperous Wales
2. A resilient Wales
3. A healthier Wales
4. A more equal Wales
5. A Wales of cohesive communities
6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
7. A globally responsible Wales

The Council's approach to the [Well-being of Future Generations Act](#) is to embed its requirements into the Council's business. The Priorities contained on this Corporate Plan also serve as the Council's Well-being Objectives.

This Corporate Plan sets out a vision, priorities and principles that continue to maximise the Council's contribution to the seven national Well-being goals. The national goals, together with the five Ways of Working, will continue to be incorporated into the detailed action plans that will deliver the Council's three priorities.

Appendix A

Examples of how the draft Corporate Plan could contribute to the seven national Well-being Goals currently include

National Well-being Goal	PEOPLE Are independent, healthy and successful	PLACES Where people are proud to live, work and play	PROSPERITY Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper
Prosperous Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Early intervention with families to keep them families safe together.</i> • <i>Improving the social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing of children and young people by increasing the range of specialist services available.</i> • <i>Being a good corporate parent to children in care and care leavers.</i> • <i>Continuing to offer support to working age adults with mental health needs.</i> • <i>Offering specific support to help people find work such as care leavers, people with disabilities and Universal Credit claimants.</i> • <i>Continuing to support working parents back into employment through the Welsh Government's 30 Hours Childcare offer.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Keeping people and traffic moving on well-maintained roads and pavements.</i> • <i>Progressing schemes that will benefit communities now and in the future including improved public transport.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Providing opportunities for businesses to emerge and flourish.</i> • <i>Building new homes.</i> • <i>Creating opportunities for jobs.</i> • <i>Providing schools where all children can achieve the best they can.</i> • <i>Developing Tourism offer and supporting businesses to meet the needs of visitors.</i> • <i>Ensuring all homes and businesses have at least access to superfast connectivity, with all key industrial and commercial hubs having access to ultrafast connectivity.</i>

National Well-being Goal	PEOPLE Are independent, healthy and successful	PLACES Where people are proud to live, work and play	PROSPERITY Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper
Resilient Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing site disturbance and material waste with shorter construction schedules. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investing in and valuing our Green Spaces Delivering natural carbon storage solutions such as those provided by trees, peat bogs, marshy grassland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting biodiversity by protecting existing habitats where possible.
Healthier Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping people to stay as well as they can for as long as they can by encouraging increased activity. GP referral schemes, and other health and wellbeing intervention programmes. Offering and signposting to prevention support for people to stay active and more independent in the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing to tackle environmental crime. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investing in our playgrounds, leisure centres and community facilities in schools. Ensuring new housing and commercial developments have capacity to generate, store and use reusable energy Make it easier for shoppers to use public transport or active travel to our town centres.
More Equal Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making sure that residents can access services, no matter what their background or circumstances. Social prescribing for referring people to interventions in the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making sure that our residents of all ages and abilities can enjoy our parks and green spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing opportunities to all our residents to improve their digital skills. Keeping Car Park charges to a minimum.

National Well-being Goal	PEOPLE Are independent, healthy and successful	PLACES Where people are proud to live, work and play	PROSPERITY Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper
Wales of Cohesive Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with the local Health Board and GPs to provide more health and care services closer to home. • Helping people to stay in their own homes for longer. • Providing Extra Care facilities for people that need additional support. • Working with residents and the community to share responsibility, helping communities to do more for themselves and give them more control over what they can do to support local people in their communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining a targeted enforcement approach against bad landlords and unsafe rented housing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring empty properties back to life. • Improving housing for all our residents and creating pleasant neighbourhoods in which communities can thrive. • Providing self-build home support service.

National Well-being Goal	PEOPLE Are independent, healthy and successful	PLACES Where people are proud to live, work and play	PROSPERITY Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper
A Wales of Vibrant Culture & Welsh Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increasing engagement and participation in the arts and culture and developing our theatres to become more inclusive and accessible to the whole community.</i> • <i>Preventing young people from getting involved in violence, crime, exploitation and anti-social behaviour through a range of cultural, sporting and other forms of early engagement and intervention</i> • <i>Providing more opportunities for our residents to communicate with the Council and each other in Welsh.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cultural and sports events for all in our parks.</i> • <i>Progressing Plans for Eisteddfod.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Promoting RCT as a visitor destination.</i> • <i>Ensuring equal access to the Welsh Language across our services.</i>
Globally Responsible Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Home to school transport vehicles, bus operators and taxi vehicles are fit for purpose and are as environmentally friendly as possible.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A Council fleet that limits impact on environment.</i> • <i>Circular approach to recycling and reuse.</i> • <i>Eliminating single use plastics across the council and schools</i> • <i>Progressing the Eco Park in Bryn Pica.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opportunities to create and use our own green sustainable energy such as micro hydro-electric schemes which utilise natural river and water course feature.</i> • <i>Increasing the supply of low carbon homes.</i>

APPENDIX B

The Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024 Consultation Summary

1 Methodology

- 1.1 The consultation period ran for 12 weeks from the 25th October 2019 to the 17th January 2020.
- 1.2 The consultation ran alongside the annual budget consultation where appropriate to avoid duplication, for example the events and forums were used to engage on the budget as well as the corporate plan priorities.
- 1.3 A website was developed to outline the plan and priorities and allow people to provide their views online. The site included a short video outlining the proposals. 73 people responded online through the site.
<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/GetInvolved/CorporatePlan/Home.aspx>
- 1.4 15 public face to face engagement events were held in venues and locations across Rhondda Cynon Taf (see table below). Members of the public were able to share their views on the priorities and suggestion any additions or general comments, which were noted. 189 people attended

Date	Event Location
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
Wednesday 4th December	Rhondda Sports Centre
Thursday 5th December	Abercynon Library
Friday 6th December	Aberdare TC
Tuesday 10th December	Hirwaun Library
Monday 9th December	Porth Morrisons

the
events.

Monday 9th December	Aberdare Sobell LC
Wednesday 11th December	Pontypridd TC
Wednesday 11th December	Disability Forum
Thursday 12th December	Llantrisant LC
Friday 13th December	Mountain Ash Hub

- 1.5 The consultation itself, the information video and the individual events were promoted via social media on Twitter and Facebook throughout the 12 week consultation period.
- 1.6 An email was sent to the Council's citizens' panel members as well as all Councillors, Town and Community Councils, partners through the Public Service board and local AMs and MPs.
- 1.7 A dedicated email address was set up and all written submissions were welcomed. A freepost address was also provided.
- 1.8 An involvement pack, with a template of questions, was prepared to allow community groups to engage with members of the community themselves.
- 1.9 We engaged with young people via a Youth Forum Event held in Pontypridd Rugby Club and filmed the feedback of some of the participants, answering a number of short questions about what it is like to live in RCT and what could be improved.
- 1.10 We attended the Council's Disability to have a discussion about the Corporate Plan and attendees filled in some short questionnaires and we once again obtained feedback through some short videos.

- 1.11 The 5 Older Persons Forums in RCT had a Health & Wellbeing event at the start of the consultation period and we set up a stand at the events, with some discussion boards to engage with people in attendance. We also filmed some of the feedback with a sample of volunteers. The Forums were also asked to disseminate the information and obtain feedback from their individual forum meetings, using the involvement pack mentioned above.
- 1.12 Staff were engaged via a global email to all staff and links to the consultation were placed on the Council's Intranet. 2 consultation events were held during staff training sessions, with 28 participants in attendance.
- 1.13 A press release on the proposals were sent to 3 local Welsh newspapers and an email was sent to a list of Welsh Stakeholders.
- 1.14 In total 367 participants contributed to the consultation.

Analysis

- 1.15 Following collection of the data, thematic content analysis was conducted on all responses to extract themes. In total, 868 references were analysed and figures have been weighted based on recent demographic data to provide an approximation of results in line with the current population in the County Borough. 16 main themes were identified, with respondents suggesting, areas of greatest importance to be Town Centres (369), Travel & Transport (322), the Environment (299) and Community (251).
- 1.16 A full breakdown and further detail of the identified themes within each priority is provided in Appendix A, while summaries for each individual group are provided at the end of their respective sections.

2 Summary of Views

- 2.1 As noted in the methodology, data was collected across a range of methods (i.e. public events, Council webpages, targeted forums and written submissions) to ensure that all viewpoints were represented within the report. This report provides a summary of the findings and selection of comments. The full list of comments will be made available to senior Officers to feed into the final Corporate Plan development.
- 2.2 From the data collected and the themes identified by respondents, we can conclude that the Council's Corporate Priorities were broadly found to sufficiently cover each of the proposed themes.
- 2.3 Overall the majority of people who attended the engagement events and responded online were positive about the priorities put forward in the Corporate Plan. In addition, people offered suggestions and outlined what was important to them and also discussed their local communities.

“Nothing to add to this, if this can be delivered....fantastic.”

“Fully support the plans put forward”

“These are definitely the right areas of focus for RCT.”

“A great plan that has the ability to drive it home. Work with the Welsh Government to attract new employers and job opportunities into the County Borough.”

“Agree with all of these”

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- 2.4 **Main priorities identified;**

- **Community (251)** - The community was seen as an important contributor to the people priority, including the importance of community Spirit in Rhondda Cynon Taf. There were references to the importance of socialising to **maintaining independence** and living a **healthy** life.

“The best thing, living there, is the community and what they do for the children and the people that live there.”

“The best thing about living in my area is that it is a great community to live in, where it’s full of friendly and caring people.”

- 2.5 Some comments suggested that the priority could also address a perceived Generational Gap (17).

“Shared spaces should include nurseries and the elderly, it’s been shown to have a positive impact on both in existing set ups”.

- 2.6 The Importance of Community Groups (65) was also emphasised in the responses, with calls for further funding and support identified.

- **Health (161)** – views predominantly focussed on the importance of Health Care Services (82) and Wellbeing (66). A perceived lack of availability of some services (39) and Accessibility to the services (26).

- 2.7 **Independence** was identified as a key theme (33) along with dealing with issues of Isolation and Loneliness (25). This was particularly the case expressed by older respondents and requests were made to support residents to live within their own homes and remain socially active, often being linked to other areas, such as public transport.

“I feel your People priority somehow needs to incorporate the wellbeing outcomes of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act. Social services play a huge part in meeting this priority and so much of what is done is focussed on supporting people to meet their own wellbeing outcomes. Wellbeing is more than independence, health and success - it’s about thriving in the way that matters to you”.

- **Council Communication/Engagement (165)** - A new theme to emerge from the data, was principally concerned with Inclusion/Engagement (88).

2.8 As part of the development of plans and priorities respondents suggested the need for further communication between the Council and resident groups, particularly in under-represented groups.

2.9 It was noted that the Council does engage well with a number of groups, such as the Older Person Forums and the Disability Forum and the Council was praised for its face to face approach at the engagement events and the ability to speak to a “person” about Council issues.

“Being with the forum has allowed me to get things fixed in my area. It’s allowed me to voice my opinions where before there was nobody listening”

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2.10 Main priorities identified;

- **Town Centres (369)** - Town centres were seen as a key priority for the Council, this included the need for continued **regeneration** (29) and the importance of dealing with **empty properties**.

“Make our town centres great places to live, work and socialise”

“Focus on town centres & focus on those with vacant units”

“Investing in town centres will bring more people and businesses in”

2.11 Under the places priority a number of comments were provided in support of **facilities** that contribute to a place where people are proud to live, work and play and there are cross overs with the health priority, especially in terms of the importance of leisure. This included fitness (90) and social (62) facilities, such as leisure centres and libraries.

2.12 There was some concern over the perceived insufficient numbers of Public Toilets (36) and Other Amenities (44), citing a lack of business diversity in towns.

- **Travel & Transport (322)** - Public Transport (205) was a key theme identified by respondents, however Parking (45) and Accessibility (35) were also deemed to be of significant importance. Within the Public Transport theme, Bus Times (40) were identified as the most pressing issue, with calls for extended services into the evening and early morning by some.

“Transport, to get to other family and friends, but also to health services. Good health services are also very important”

- **Environment (299)** – Another key priority was the environment, with the importance of **green spaces** identified (131) as well as street **cleanliness** (131), with **Sustainability** (28) also highlighted as an area that the Council should focus on.

“Yes – all of these are equally important. Recycling is key.”

“The environment we live in is now very clean and we have a lot of greenery around us.”

“The area now is quite green and it is quite clean on the whole. I just think that it’s a nice place to live.”

- 2.13 The comments on Sustainability, showed the increasing importance of both **Recycling** (8) and **Air Quality** (7).

“I am very happy that RCTCBC is prioritising green issues, I am thinking of buying an electric car. However there are not many publicly available charging stations in RCT. I think it would be a great idea if RCTCBC would install charging stations and maybe collect revenue from them to be used to fund other new green projects.”

- 2.14 The issue of **climate change** and how the Council could contribute was also mentioned.

“Do more within the Council to positively contribute to climate change. Implement internal policies that will have positive impacts on the environment, even in the smallest of ways”.

“I would like to see more emphasis given to Communities, from a social and responsibility point of view, starting with young people encouraging them to understand the impact we are all having on the world around us and encouraging them to care for their bright future and the Environment,

from a Climate Change point of view list above as I am very concerned and worried that we as a society are not giving this issue enough of a priority”.

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2.15 Main priorities identified;

- **Education (63)** – Unsurprisingly Schools was the main theme (57) and, in particular, the need to maintain high standards (26).

“education for the younger people, making sure schools are fit for purpose. We’re quite fortunate I think, where we are, that the local schools are quite good, but it is general that education has got to be a priority.”

“These are definitely the right areas of focus for RCT. One suggestion to add would that RCT values the importance of education in transforming lives of its young people and is ensuring that all its schools provide the very best education.”

- **Housing (51)** - Land use (25) and Affordable Housing (24) were the key housing themes. Concerns were raised over the development of new houses and affordable housing was seen as important.
- **Equality (31)** - were distributed between Resource Distribution (12), Equal Opportunities (9) and Support (9). The resource distribution relates to services being shared equally across the County Borough. References to Equal Opportunities (9) were predominantly general mentions supporting fair and equal treatment to all residents, those relating to Support (9) were more specific, with homelessness being suggested as a priority.

“Ensure resources are equally spread across Rhondda, Cynon & Taff”

Other Suggestions/Recommendations

2.16 In addition to the agreement with the proposed priorities respondents mentioned a number of themes/ideas that they thought the Council should include in the Corporate Plan, including;

- **Incorporate ‘Council Communication’ into the People priority:** Having received 52 references throughout the consultation, Council Communication could be included as a sub section within the People priority. This could outline how the Council plans to ensure that all residents receive information relevant to their individual needs and detail which media will be used to improve levels of inclusion and accessibility.
- **Make reference to ‘Council Operations’ within the Prosperity priority:** As both the largest employer and a key financial stakeholder within the local economy, residents have indicated that the Council should acknowledge its own performance in the Corporate Plan 2020-2024, beyond that of service delivery. This could include: improvements to funding, i.e. better co-operation with Welsh Government; advancement of internal processes, i.e. upgrading, integrating and streamlining systems; adoption of sustainable procurement, i.e. increasing local spend & recruitment; and improvement of working conditions, i.e. fair pay, promoting employee wellbeing & reviewing available opportunities for development.
- **Sub themes - ACEs, LGBTQ+ issues, gender equality and drop kerbs:** Though possibly addressed implicitly within the broader themes of the Council’s Corporate Plan draft, a number of sub themes emerged from the data that may warrant inclusion. These included more emphasis on: The prevention of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), greater support of LGBTQ+ issues within schools and the wider community, the addressing of gender equality issues (specifically period poverty), and the improved provision of dropped kerbs for mobility restricted residents.
- **Recognise the increasing importance of environmental issues:** While the current Corporate Plan draft makes reference to environmental sustainability across a variety of sections, evidence from the data would justify the inclusion of sustainability as its own distinct section under the ‘places’ priority. Though no one theme emerged as a matter of precedence, references to climate change, air quality, waste reduction, recycling, green initiatives, electric vehicles and environmental education were all recurrent throughout the data..

Overall

- 2.17 Overall, themes relating to Town Centres, Travel & Transport, Environment and Community were the most prevalent themes in the consultation, with Community and Education topping their respective priorities.
- 2.18 Reported themes within the **'People' priority** focussed on Community and Health, with respective themes of Community Spirit and Health Care Services referenced most frequently. Considerable interest was also given to Council communication, with levels of Inclusion/Engagement, methods of communication and Standards all addressed.
- 2.19 Common responses related to the **'Places' priority** included Town Centres and Travel & Transport and Environment. Town Facilities, i.e. Fitness and Social Leisure facilities, and Public Transport Bus Times emerged as key concerns for Town Centres and Travel & Transport respectively, while Environment themes were primarily focussed on Cleanliness and Green Spaces.
- 2.20 Responses for the **'Prosperity' Priority** centred on Education and Housing, with School Standards and strain on local Facilities the most frequently recorded sub themes. Further importance was given to the provision of Affordable Housing, while the availability of Local Jobs was among other common concerns.

3 Public Consultation Results

- 3.1 The public consultation used a qualitative approach with comments recorded. A total of 122 participants took part in the public consultation events, with a further 73 responses submitted via the Corporate Plan webpage.
- 3.2 From our discussions the majority of people who attended the events and responded online agreed with the Council's approach and priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan.

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- **Support & Social Care (13)** – this theme included the need for the Council to **support families and older people**. Free School Meals and **Early Intervention** were of most importance.
- **Health (12)** - Themes relating to Health were most frequently made in reference to **physical health**, specifically the importance of fitness incentives such as subsidised leisure memberships and outdoor fitness equipment. The importance of **Mental Health and Wellbeing** were also mentioned
- **Community (9)** – The role of the community was seen as important, specifically the need to involve Community Groups. Community Spirit was also mentioned along with the importance of community facilities.

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- **Travel & Transport (45)** - the public discussed the need for adequate **parking** and stressed the importance of **public transport** for work and for general travel.
- **Environment (35)** – Comments were focussed on Cleanliness (16) and Sustainability (9). The Sustainability references mentioned the importance of Recycling and the need for Council to consider Climate Change.

Other themes related to:

- Town Centres and highlighted the importance of local Facilities
- Parks and Play areas
- Community Safety and concerns of Anti-Social Behaviour.

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- **Employment (13)** - Local jobs were seen as a key consideration, however most responses from the general public related to Council employment.
- **Education (9)** - comments were about the importance of schools, particularly with regard to maintaining high Standards and improving career support. Further themes associated with equality encouraged more support for the homeless and those with additional learning needs.
- **Housing (8)** - The comments on housing focussed on the importance of having a good availability of affordable housing and a perceived local strain on resources caused by new housing developments.

4 Older Persons Consultation Results

- 4.1 Areas of greatest concern for older persons include **Travel & Transport, Health and Town Centres**.
- 4.2 **People:** Within the 'People' priority, Older Respondents focussed predominantly on areas of Health (22) and Community (18)
- 4.3 Of the themes relating to Health, respondents showed most interest in Health Care Services (9) and, in particular, the Availability (4) and Accessibility (3) of such services.
- 4.4 Considerable attention was also given to themes of Wellbeing (8), with specific regard to both Independence (4) and Isolation (3). Moreover, Physical Health (4) was prioritised over Mental Health (1), with the former exclusively relating to the provision of Fitness Incentives.
- 4.5 Among themes of Community, Older Respondents placed greatest emphasis on Community Spirit (9) and Community Groups (7). While references to Community Spirit were unspecific (6), identified from phrases such as 'Friendliness', 'Belonging' and 'Helpful Neighbours', direct reference was made toward addressing the Generational Gap (2):

- 4.6 **Places:** Older Persons showed considerable interest in all areas of the 'Places' priority, with Travel & Transport (26) and Town Centres (25) most frequently mentioned, followed by themes of Environment (15) and Safety (10).
- 4.7 References within the category of Travel & Transport referred primarily to Public Transport (22). While most instances were General (9), mentioning public transport as a priority without providing detail, particular attention was given to the extending of Bus Times (4), provision of Bus Shelter Facilities (3) and routes to Health Facilities (3):
- 4.8 Of responses relating to Town Centres, themes from Older Persons fell almost exclusively into the category of Facilities (23). Within this category, the majority of themes were distributed equally between Sports/Fitness Facilities (6) and Social Leisure Facilities (6), indicating a desire to remain active and socialise.
- 4.9 Environmental themes from older respondents related to the importance of Green Spaces (10) and Cleanliness (5).
- 4.10 **Prosperity:** Though least frequency referenced, Older Respondents showed a broad interest across matters relating to the 'Prosperity' priority, with particular emphasis on the categories of Housing (5) and Education (3).
- 4.11 **Summary:** Of most importance to Older Respondents were themes of Travel & Transport, Town Centres and Health. Prevalent themes included Public Transport, town Facilities and Health Care Services.

5 Younger Persons Consultation Results

- 5.1 Data collection for Younger Persons was conducted across 4 consultation events: 3 within Youth Clubs in each of the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf valleys respectively; and 1 during a County District Youth Forum.
- 5.2 The age of participants ranged from 11 to 17, with 41 people contributing in total. Following initial discussions, both recorded interviews and interactive poster exercises were utilised to collect data during the consultation event. 210 themes were recorded in total.
- 5.3 **People:** Themes within the 'People' priority were distributed relatively equally between the categories of Young People (28), Community (27) and Council Communication (24). These were followed distantly by Support & Social Care (2), with no reference made to the remaining categories.
- 5.4 Responses under the theme of Young People linked strongly to Youth Activities (27), youth Clubs (13) were a topic of particular interest which, along with Sports (6), were viewed as positive resources in their respective areas. Availability (6) however, was identified as an issue, with certain areas lacking access to such facilities:
- 5.5 Themes relating to Council Communication (24) largely referred to the Inclusion/Engagement (16) of Younger People. While the County Youth Forum and YEPS programmes were singled out as positive initiatives, Young Respondents felt that more could be done to communicate with them, with suggestions of School Boards and through Digital Means, such as: dedicated websites and social media.
- 5.6 **Places:** Within the 'Places' priority, Younger Persons most frequently referenced themes relating to Town Centres (56). While further attention was given to the categories of Environment (33) and Safety (21), Travel & Transport (8) received relatively little interest.
- 5.7 Responses relating to Town Centres (56) comprised two sub categories: Facilities (50) and Regeneration/Aesthetics (6). Of the former, Sports & Fitness Facilities (21) were most regularly cited, with skate parks, trampoline parks and astro/3G pitches among the most desired facilities. Retail Units (12) and Parks/Play Areas (8) followed as popular facilities.

5.8 Following Town Centres, themes of Environment (33) were most reported, with the majority of responses encompassed within the Cleanliness (22) and Green Spaces (9) categories.

5.9 References to Safety (21) related chiefly to Anti-Social Behaviour (11) and Street Lighting (4). Within Anti-Social Behaviour, issues of Substance Misuse (8) were of greatest concern to Young Respondents. Conversely, while noting the importance of safety, multiple respondents commended the low crime rate in their local area:

“Myself and my family feel safer in Pentre than we did in our old home town ... in Pentre we don’t see much graffiti.

5.10 **Prosperity:** Though sparsely referenced overall, ‘Prosperity’ responses from Younger Persons were dominated by Education (9). Of the themes relating to Education, most refer directly to Schools (8), with Bullying (1) and Career Support (1) mentioned among areas of importance.

5.11 **Summary:** Key considerations for Younger Persons aligned with the ‘Places’ priority and included references to Town Centres and Environment, with access to Sports/Leisure Facilities and Litter among important issues. Recorded themes for ‘People’ centred mainly on Young People and Community, specifically addressing Community Spirit and the availability of youth activities. Within the ‘Prosperity’ priority, Schools were most commonly frequently mentioned, with issued raised around Gender Equality.

6 Disabled Persons Consultation Results

6.1 Officers attended the County Borough's Disability Forum meeting to discuss the consultation and obtain feedback from members. To increase inclusion and accessibility, multiple methods of data collection were utilised within the Disability Forum. These included: a standardised pro forma for written submissions, group discussions and video recorded interviews. A total 54 themes were extracted from participant responses. 12 participants contributed in total.

6.2 The main areas of concern for members of this group included Environment and Transport with Community and Council Communication also emerging as areas of importance.

6.3 Within the '**People**' priority, Respondents at the Disability Forum focussed predominantly on Community (6) and Council Communication (6). Of great importance to respondents in this group was the idea of strong community links and friendships. Respondents felt that having a strong community was important to them and many identified the Disability Forum as a good opportunity to socialise and meet friends.

"I think, to be honest, it's a jolly good forum because it gets you out, it helps other people with the ideas and everything like that, doesn't it? You know, we have a jolly good chat, we have a laugh and everything is so interesting."

6.4 Council Communication and more specifically the methods of communication used were identified as areas of importance. Specifically related to members of the forum, ensuring that communication was adapted to suit all members was important as a way of residents having their voice heard. Support was given to the avenues such as the disability forum in providing a platform for disabled members to tackle issues that affect them.

"This forum is such a good forum for people that suffer from ailments like disabilities, they can have their say about the area and what is done in the area for disabled people."

6.5 **Places:** Members of the disability forum showed great interest in all the identified priorities in this area. Of the three priorities outlined as part of

the consultation 'Places' provided a great deal of the discussion at the event with Environment (14) and Travel & Transport (11) being identified as of great importance. Under the theme of Environment, important issues that arose from discussions showed that cleanliness (6) and green spaces (4) were of highest importance.

6.6 Within Travel and Transport particular importance was given to accessibility (4). In particular, members of the forum demonstrated the importance of dropped kerbs across the borough.

6.7 Public transport was seen as another important issue for the group with praise being given to the local public transport services. These were viewed as a key link for members of the forum to access all areas across RCT. Some limitations to the service were also commented on during the meeting.

"The local bus service is important as there are no trains in the area."

"Transport is good around our area. It stops after 6 o'clock, which is a little bit awkward, it goes on to the Sunday service, which is one every two hours."

6.8 **Prosperity:** This section obtained the least comments from the group however a number of comments were made indicating the importance of the economy, equality and housing. Whilst comment numbers were relatively low in this section, an indication that inclusivity and accessibility of opportunities was important to this group whilst also ensuring that affordable homes were available to residents across RCT.

"That there are opportunities and facilities in the local community that are inclusive and accessible to all."

"Affordable homes are important to have."

6.9 **Summary:** Overall, responses from the Disability Forum related heavily to Environment and Travel and Transport within the 'Places' priority, with particular concern for Cleanliness, Green Spaces and Dropped Kerbs. Themes related to the 'People' priority included Council Communication and Community Spirit, with particular importance placed on the effective communication of information to those in most need. Few references were made to the 'Prosperity' priority, however Economy, Equality, Housing and Council Performance were all briefly mentioned.

7 Council Staff Consultation Results

- 7.1 As the largest employer in the County Borough, with individuals closest to the operation and delivery of public services, RCT Council Staff were included as key stakeholders in the Corporate Plan consultation. Data was collected across two staff training sessions, with 28 participants from a variety of services. Participants were asked to take part in group discussions and submit written feedback on each of the Council's Corporate Priorities. 162 references were recorded in total, with each of the 16 primary themes represented at least once.
- 7.2 Themes relating to Environment (24) and Travel & Transport (22) were most frequent among Staff responses, while considerable attention was also given to Safety (16), Health (15) and Education (15).
- 7.3 **People:** Among themes relating to the 'People' priority, Council Staff were most concerned with matters of Health (15) and Community (11), with moderate emphasis given to Culture (8) and Council Communication (6).
- 7.4 References to Health Care Services (7) were most frequently recorded within the Health (15) theme, each addressing Access (5) to health care or Integration (2) of services. Remaining responses encompassed Mental (3) and Physical (5) health, the former centred on service Standards (2) and Funding (1), whereas the latter focussed on Fitness Incentives (3) and access to accompanying Facilities (2).
- 7.5 With regard to Community (11) themes, Staff responses were most frequently associated with the availability of Community Events (3) and Community Facilities (3), while references to Community Groups (2) and Networking (2) with local initiatives and other communities were also recorded.
- 7.6 Accounting for more references to the theme than any other group, Culture (8) was of considerable importance to Staff Respondents. Although Welsh Language (1) and Cultural Education (1) were both mentioned, themes within the culture category were predominantly associated with Cultural Facilities (6):

- 7.7 Further themes were largely distributed across Council Communication (6) and Young People (5). References to the former principally addressed issues of Inclusion (3) and accessible information, the latter noted a need for increased availability of Youth Activities.
- 7.8 **Places:** Staff responses relating to the 'Places' priority were primarily focussed on Environment (24) and Travel & Transport (22), however both Safety (16) and Town Centres (13) also received significant interest.
- 7.9 Of the themes relating to Environment (24), references to Green Spaces (12) were most commonly recorded. Within Green Spaces, Community Involvement (7) was deemed most important, with mentions of encouraging greater use, promoting outdoor activities and supporting associated community groups.
- 7.10 Staff responses in reference to Travel & Transport (22), were chiefly related to Public Transport (12), with the Affordability (3) and Availability (2) of services being of greatest concern. Among suggestions for improvement were the introduction of travel cards and linking with public facilities;
- 7.11 Themes of Safety (16) were mainly focussed on the general increase of Police Presence (7) and reduction of Anti-Social Behaviour (5), with some particular mention of tackling Substance Misuse (2). While remaining references were distributed somewhat sporadically across the category, multiple responses were received under the theme of Service Provision (2), specifically regarding the integration of services and improvement of response times.
- 7.12 Among Staff responses relating to Town Centres (13), themes of Facilities (8) and Regeneration/Aesthetics (4) were most common. Whereas references to Facilities covered a range of areas including Accessibility (2), Retail Units (2) and Other Amenities (2), i.e. more diverse businesses, references to Regeneration/Aesthetics centred almost entirely on addressing the problem of Empty Properties (3).
- 7.13 **Prosperity:** Within the 'Prosperity' priority, themes from Staff responses were mainly centred on Education (15), Economy (14) and Equality (8). In regard to Education (15), Staff participants placed greatest emphasis on adult Qualifications/Skills Development (12), making reference to the Availability (3), Affordability (3) and Awareness

(3) of related services. As mentioned in the quote below, suggestions for improvement included stronger partnerships with organisations such as Careers 4 Wales and the attraction of new businesses to the area:

“[The Council] need to attract businesses to the area, which will in turn start the qualification/upskill process”

- 7.14 Economy (14) themes were divided between Business (9) and Local Economy (5). Most common of the references within the Business category were those relating to the effective use of Council Procurement (3) to support local companies, including the review of contract frameworks and recruitment of local contractors.
- 7.15 Staff responses which referenced Equality (8) were again shared across Equal Opportunities (4) and Resource Distribution (4). Among the former were calls to embrace Diversity (2) and make opportunities available to those in employment as well as the unemployed. The latter, Resource Distribution, highlighted concerns of underrepresented Areas (3), with Council efforts perceived to be disproportionately focussed on locations within the Cynon Valley.
- 7.16 **Summary:** Staff responses were primarily concerned with Environment and Travel & Transport, however Education, Health and Economy each also received considerable attention. References to ‘People’ were largely associated with Health and Community, with Health Care Services, Physical Health and Youth Activities prominent sub themes. Considerable attention was also given to Culture and, in particular, Cultural Facilities.

Responses within the ‘Places’ priority centred on issues of Environment and Travel & Transport. While Community Involvement was frequently recorded in relation with the former, references to the latter largely focussed on affordable Public Transport.

‘Prosperity’ themes were mostly related to Education and Economy. Of the Education responses, greatest importance was given to the Availability, Affordability and Accessibility of further Qualifications/Skills Development. The latter addressed issues of both Business and Local Economy, with relaxed Business Rates and sustainable Procurement among the popular topics.

8 LGBTQ+ Consultation Results

- 8.1 A single consultation exercise took place during the inaugural Rhondda Pride event, wherein members of the LGBTQ+ community were asked to submit written notes outlining the issues they deemed to be most important. In total, 76 submissions were received during the event.
- 8.2 Responses from the LGBTQ+ Community were overwhelmingly focussed on Education (41), with only 5 primary themes emerging from the responses overall.
- 8.3 **People:** All themes within the 'People' priority related to either Community (15) or Support & Social Care (10).
- 8.4 Of the references to Community (15), each was directly tailored toward the increased frequency and promotion of Community Events (15), intended to advance Diversity Awareness (15). Suggestions for improvement in this area included the support of, and collaboration with, local LGBTQ+ Community Groups, engagement with younger LGBTQ+ members and appointment of LGBTQ+ representatives.
- 8.5 Responses pertaining to Support & Social Care (10) comprised the remaining themes within the 'People' priority, again all of which related to Diversity (10) and specifically LGBTQ+ (10) support systems. Participants noted that events such as Rhondda Pride were the only form of support available, with support in schools particularly insufficient.
- 8.6 **Places:** Responses within the 'Places' priority were exclusively related to issues of Safety (7). Concerns of Safety (7) were entirely centred on Anti-Social Behaviour in the form of Discrimination/Hate Crime (7). Participants requested that greater co-operation between the Police and LGBTQ+ was pursued and that awareness was raised of related services, such as the South Wales Police hate crime reporting system.
- 8.7 **Prosperity:** Themes within the 'Prosperity' priority were vastly directed towards Education (41), with some reference also given to Equality (3). Responses related to Education (41) were solely associated with Gender/Diversity Equality (41). The general consensus was that improved support systems were required across all schools, with specific

training provided to staff, greater visibility of LGBTQ+ representatives and more lessons provided on sexuality and gender identity. Specific concern was also raised over the support and protection of trans students, who were perceived to receive particularly poor support.

- 8.8 **Summary:** Of the 16 primary themes, only 5 were referenced by LGBTQ+ respondents, with the vast majority of responses centred on themes of Education.

Among the 'People' responses, LGBTQ+ respondents were most concerned with Community Events and Support & Social Care, both addressing the need for greater support and awareness of LGBTQ+ issues.

Within the 'Places' priority, responses were solely focussed on the single issue of Safety and, more specifically, protection against the occurrence of Hate Crimes.

References to the 'Prosperity' theme were overwhelmingly directed toward Education and the improvement of LGBTQ+ support and awareness in schools. Further responses focussed on Equal Opportunities, particularly related to LGBTQ+ in the workplace.

Appendix A: Definitions of Primary Themes

People

Primary Theme	Definition
Culture	<i>Any responses related to the protection or promotion of meaningful social traditions, heritage or the arts.</i>
Community	<i>References to people and relationships within a social context.</i>
Council Communication	<i>Responses related to the passing of information between the Council and its stakeholders.</i>
Health	<i>Responses related to any aspect of a person's health, physical, mental or otherwise.</i>
Support & Social Care	<i>References to additional care and support services, particularly the recipient has a recognised vulnerability.</i>
Young People	<i>Any reference to services or facilities tailored toward people below the age of 18.</i>

Table 9. Primary Theme Definitions (People).

Places

Primary Theme	Definition
Environment	<i>References relating to the natural physical environment and factors that may affect its current or future state.</i>
Town Centres	<i>References to the condition of local business commercial centres, including any public facilities and other amenities.</i>
Travel & Transport	<i>References to factors affecting the movement of people throughout the County Borough.</i>
Safety	<i>Factors relating to the sense of safety and security experienced by residents.</i>

Table 10. Primary Theme Definitions (Places).

Prosperity

Primary Theme	Definition
Council Operations	<i>References to Council systems and processes which may influence the wider community.</i>
Economy	<i>Factors affecting the conduct of business and commerce throughout the County Borough.</i>
Education	<i>References to both schools and opportunities for additional learning.</i>
Equality	<i>Factors affecting the ability of all peoples within the County Borough to develop and succeed equally.</i>
Housing	<i>Factors relating to the residences and accommodation of people within Rhondda Cynon Taf.</i>

Table 11. Primary Theme Definitions (Prosperity).

Population Adjusted Themes

People		Places		Prosperity	
Theme (Sub Theme)	Freq.	Theme (Sub Theme)	Freq.	Theme (Sub Theme)	Freq.
Community	251	Town Centres	369	Education	63
<i>Community Spirit</i>	161	<i>Facilities</i>	325	<i>Schools</i>	57
<i>Community Groups</i>	65	<i>Regeneration/Aesthetics</i>	29	<i>Qualifications/Skills Development</i>	6
<i>Community Facilities</i>	18	<i>Accessibility</i>	15		
<i>Community Events</i>	6				
<i>Networks</i>	1				
Health	193	Travel & Transport	322	Housing	51
<i>Health Care Services</i>	82	<i>Public Transport</i>	203	<i>Land Use</i>	25
<i>Wellbeing</i>	66	<i>Parking</i>	45	<i>Affordable Housing</i>	24
<i>Physical Health</i>	35	<i>Accessibility</i>	35	<i>Private Rental</i>	1
<i>Mental Health</i>	10	<i>Highways</i>	18	<i>Housing Support</i>	<1
<i>Health Education</i>	<1	<i>Electric Vehicles</i>	14		
		<i>Traffic</i>	3		
		<i>Active Travel</i>	3		
Council Communication	165	Environment	299	Equality	31
<i>Inclusion/Engagement</i>	88	<i>Green Spaces</i>	131	<i>Resource Distribution</i>	12
<i>Methods</i>	44	<i>Cleanliness</i>	131	<i>Equal Opportunities</i>	9
<i>Standards</i>	33	<i>Sustainability</i>	28	<i>Support</i>	9
		<i>Noise</i>	7		
		<i>Land Use</i>	1		
		<i>Environmental Education</i>	1		
		<i>Flood Risk</i>	1		

People		Place		Prosperity	
Theme (<i>Sub Theme</i>)	Freq.	Theme (<i>Sub Theme</i>)	Freq	Theme (<i>Sub Theme</i>)	Freq
Young People	74	Safety	162	Economy	24
<i>Youth Activities</i>	63	<i>Anti-Social Behaviour</i>	67	<i>Business</i>	17
<i>Youth Facilities</i>	11	<i>Police Presence</i>	59	<i>Local Economy</i>	7
<i>Service Provision</i>	<1	<i>Road Safety</i>	11		
		<i>Street Lighting</i>	9		
		<i>Other</i>	1		
		<i>Service Provision</i>	1		
		<i>General</i>	14		
Social Care	30			Employment	23
<i>Disabled Persons Support</i>	11			<i>Local Jobs</i>	19
<i>Elderly Persons Support</i>	11			<i>Council Employment</i>	3
<i>Diversity Support</i>	3			<i>Adult Career Support</i>	1
<i>Family Support</i>	2				
<i>Food Poverty</i>	2				
<i>Resources</i>	1				
<i>Younger Persons Support</i>	<1				
Culture	5			Council Operations	16
<i>Cultural Facilities</i>	3			<i>Processes</i>	15
<i>Arts</i>	<1			<i>Funding</i>	1
<i>Cultural Education</i>	<1				
<i>Welsh Language</i>	<1				
Total	714	Total	1152	Total	211

Table 12. Primary and Secondary Theme Frequencies (Population Adjusted).

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

13 FEBRUARY 2020

CONSIDERATION FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OFFICER ROLES

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES (COUNCILLOR MRS J ROSSER)

Author: DANIEL WILLIAMS, HEAD OF ATTENDANCE AND WELLBEING SERVICE
(Tel: 01443 744298)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this briefing is to consider the funding and consequent employment of Family Engagement Officers in six secondary/through schools to help tackle school attendance.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the information contained in the report.
- 2.2 Determine whether to agree to the funding and consequent employment of Family Engagement Officers in six secondary/through schools to help improve attendance.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 In the academic year 2018/19, secondary school attendance (including special schools) in RCT declined 0.1% from the previous year to 92.8%. This is the lowest point since the 2012/13 academic year and placed RCT 22nd in the All Wales attendance table.
- 3.2 As a result of declining figures in recent years, attendance has been made an RCT priority. To ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are supported the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate has identified a model of best practice within our Primary Schools that we believe would be beneficial to supporting attendance as well as forming and enhancing relationships with parents in our lowest performing settings. This model is based around the role of Family Engagement Officers.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Family Engagement Officers provide an important link between the school, parents/carers and pupils and have been shown to provide an effective and valued role. Glenboi Primary School are one example where this role has worked extremely well. In the March 2019 inspection of the school by Estyn, under the 'Care, Support

and Guidance' element where the school was ranked excellent, the following comment was made:

'The family engagement officer is highly effective in engaging with parents and external agencies. She supports the delivery of highly successful programmes, which have a very positive impact on pupils' wellbeing, attendance and attitudes to learning...The family engagement officer monitors attendance carefully and liaises closely with parents and staff. She offers outstanding practical support to families who find it a struggle to send their children to school on time.'

- 4.2 The role was also highlighted under the Leadership and Management section of Estyn's report which was also deemed excellent. The role was provided as an example of how the school helps to reduce the effect of poverty and deprivation on vulnerable pupils.
- 4.3 Parental questionnaires at the time showed 100% of parents are satisfied with the school, 100% feel well informed about their child's progress and 99% felt the school communicates well with them.
- 4.4 For contextual purposes, Glenboi Primary School at the time had 65% of pupils eligible for free school meals which is well above the national average of 18.4%; 44% of pupils with additional learning needs and a social, emotional and behavioural difficulties unit on site. Glenboi Primary School ranks the 11th most deprived school in RCT in terms of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) with 77% of pupils living within the top 10% most deprived Lower Super Output Areas which rises to 90% of pupils when considering the top 20% most deprived areas.
- 4.5 We therefore feel this model has been shown to work in a challenging environment with some of our most vulnerable pupils and families.
- 4.6 In a wider context, Education Scotland¹ have created a toolkit for practitioners for home-school link workers. In this toolkit they identify 14 impacts of such as service which includes improved attendance, behaviour, attachment, language and communication as well as the development of stronger connections, community engagement and reduced isolation.

5. PROPOSAL FOR CONSIDERATION

- 5.1 To help foster the relationship between schools and families at secondary level and to help improve attendance, we are therefore requesting support to pilot the placement of Family Engagement Officers in 6 schools across the County Borough. These schools and their current school categorisation are:

Porth Community School (Red)
Aberdare Community School (Red)
Mountain Ash Comprehensive School (Amber)
Ferndale Community School (Amber)
Tonyrefail Community School (Yellow)

¹ Education Scotland, 'Engaging parents and families. A toolkit for practitioners. Section 9: Home-school link worker/service', March 2019

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiwzpuNiaTnAhWPuHUIHfiJAKoQFjAAegQIARAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Feducation.gov.scot%2Fimprovement%2FDocuments%2Fpar2-section9-mar19.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0y1Aul_J9uenV9zOmi_wrV

Ysgol Nantgwyn (Yellow)

- 5.2 The rationale for choosing these schools is that, discounting special schools, they were the lowest performing schools in terms of secondary attendance for the 2018/19 academic year ranging in attendance from 90.77% to 91.93% (see Appendix One). All six schools well below the RCT target we had set at 94.1%.
- 5.3 In the 2017/18 academic year, Aberdare, Mountain Ash, Tonypany Community College (predecessor to Ysgol Nantgwyn), Ferndale, and Porth County (predecessor to Porth Community School) were the five lowest performing schools at secondary level. Therefore, there is a historic pattern of poor attendance in these areas.
- 5.4 The breadth of schools across the categorisation criteria will provide us with comparative information to see how well these roles can help support varying aspects within schools and determine if they are needed across all secondary/through schools.
- 5.5 All but Porth Community School rank in the five most deprived secondary/through schools when looking at data sets from the WIMD. Porth Community School ranks 8th. The two schools falling in 6th and 7th place are Hawthorn High School and Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda. However, attendance at these schools was significantly higher in the 2018/19 academic year than Porth Community School as they achieved 92.59% and 93.27% respectively compared to Porth Community School's 90.80% in the same period.
- 5.6 As part of the job description for these posts, we would require work to be undertaken with feeder primary schools particularly Year 6 pupils and their families to enhance the support we offer for the transition period. We are confident this would help pupils and families entering Year 7 to have a focal point in their new school who could support with any queries or concerns and prevent these from becoming attendance issues.

6. MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING OF THE SCHEME

- 6.1 Family Engagement Officers would be line managed by the school in which they were placed but would work on priorities jointly agreed by the school and local authority. The local authority would be jointly involved in the interview process.
- 6.2 Schools will be requested to complete a self-evaluation audit of current practice around attendance at the start of the scheme.
- 6.3 The results of this audit will be discussed with the Attendance and Wellbeing Service and where appropriate school improvement officers, to agree an action plan for improving practice utilising the Family Engagement Officer role.
- 6.4 As the funding will be provided with a very clear remit for improving attendance, headteachers will be held accountable for delivering improved outcomes as a result of the investment. Clear performance targets aimed at improving rates of attendance and engagement will be set and written updates will be required against this action plan in School Improvement Forums/Progress Meetings in newly re-organised yellow schools, amber and red categorised schools. Alternatively, progress will be reviewed in Support and Challenge meetings as defined in the Graduated Response to Attendance and Exclusions Protocol.

- 6.5 As this role will be critical in providing the link between school, families and external agencies, schools will also be required to evidence effective partnership working between the Family Engagement Officer, parents/carers and external agencies such as the Attendance and Wellbeing Service, Inclusion Services, Resilient Families, Youth Engagement and Participation etc.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 No Equality Impact Assessment is required at the current time.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 There are no consultation implications arising from the content of the report.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Family Engagement Officers are employed at Grade 6 of the Pay Scale. We are initially looking to fund posts across a 17 month trial period from 1st April 2020 to 31st August 2021. To employ officers to cover six areas would equate to approximately £174,000 (including on costs) per annum. It is proposed that this cost will be met from within existing resources.
- 9.2 Regular performance reporting in relation to the funding will be required and outcomes closely monitored.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 None at present.

11. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP

- 11.1 Educational performance has a clear link to the Council's priority of Building a Strong Economy. Improved educational performance will have a positive impact on this priority

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 We are seeking financial support and agreement to help tackle poor attendance at secondary level via the employment of Family Engagement Officers in six educational settings.
- 12.2 We will monitor the effectiveness of the pilot to ascertain whether further rollout is needed across all secondary settings.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee-

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Background Papers-

None

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET
13th FEBRUARY 2020

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN
DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR J ROSSER.**

Author: Daniel Williams, Head of Attendance and Wellbeing Service

Background papers – None.

Officer to contact: Daniel Williams – 01443 744298

APPENDIX 1

Secondary Phase Attendance 2018/19 exc. Special Schools

ESTAB	SCHOOL NAME	No Of Pupils	Present		Authorised		Unauthorised		Poss_sess Sessions
			Sessions	%	Sessions	%	Sessions	%	
4106	Aberdare Community School	1187	325883	91.56	17552	4.93	12479	3.51	355914
4019	Bryncelynnog Comprehensive School	1068	300333	92.99	11812	3.66	10818	3.35	322963
4602	Cardinal Newman RC Comprehensive School	777	213080	93.62	10310	4.53	4218	1.85	227608
4083	Ferndale Community School	605	166531	91.95	9044	4.99	5527	3.05	181102
4027	Hawthorn High School	656	182260	92.59	6697	3.40	7889	4.01	196846
4053	Mountain Ash Comprehensive School	872	235030	90.77	11541	4.46	12351	4.77	258922
4022	Pontypridd High School	791	224208	93.06	9399	3.90	7331	3.04	240938
5501	Porth Community School	722	192165	90.80	9621	4.55	9845	4.65	211631
4604	St John Baptist C in W High School	806	234587	94.67	10215	4.12	3001	1.21	247803
5503	Tonyrefail Community School	897	241536	90.89	12679	4.77	11544	4.34	265759
4081	Treorchy Comprehensive School	1306	370321	93.48	19736	4.98	6075	1.53	396132
4096	Y Pant Comprehensive School	1169	336292	94.79	13446	3.79	5022	1.42	354760
4097	Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda	623	175983	93.27	8428	4.47	4263	2.26	188674
4054	Ysgol Gyfun Garth Olwg	692	199229	93.71	9883	4.65	3500	1.65	212612
4105	Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun	861	247155	93.68	12476	4.73	4185	1.59	263816
5500	Ysgol Llanhari	451	130447	94.49	6325	4.58	1286	0.93	138058
5502	Ysgol Nantgwyn	593	159531	91.93	8744	5.04	5256	3.03	173531
	Total	13932	3934571	92.86	187908	4.43	114590	2.70	4237069

Family Engagement Officer Example Job Description

JOB DESCRIPTION & PERSON SPECIFICATION

Department	Education & Lifelong Learning
School	
Post Title:	Pupil/Family Engagement Officer
Vision Post Number:	
Responsible to:	
Posts reporting:	
DBS Required Level:	Enhanced
Date of Description:	

Responsibilities

- Be aware of and comply with policies and procedures relating to child protection, health and safety and security, confidentiality and data protection, reporting all concerns to the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or Senior Management team.
- Be aware and support difference and ensure equal opportunities.
- Contribute to the overall ethos / work / aims of the school.
- Appreciate and support the role of other professionals working in the school.
- Participate in training and other learning activities and performance development as required.
- Maintain a clean and tidy working environment including your surrounding area.
- Work collaboratively with feeder schools to build relationships with families prior to transition.

To carry out health and safety responsibilities in accordance with the Division's Health & Safety Responsibilities document.

To undertake such other duties and responsibilities commensurate with the grade, as may be reasonably required by the Headteacher, or as a mutually agreed development opportunity.

THE CONTENTS OF THE DOCUMENT WILL BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW FROM TIME TO TIME IN CONSULTATION WITH THE POST HOLDER. JOB DESCRIPTIONS MAY BE AMENDED TO REFLECT AND RECORD SUCH CHANGES.

Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults is a core responsibility of all staff. Staff are expected to alert their line manager to any concerns they may have regarding the abuse or inappropriate treatment of a Child or Young Person, or Vulnerable Adults.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

The Person Specification sets out the knowledge and / or qualifications, past experience and personal competencies that would be ideal for this particular post.

The **Experience** section describes what is required in terms of what is needed to undertake this job.

The **Qualifications/Training** section describes the required standards needed to undertake this particular role.

The **Knowledge/Skills** section describes the kinds of non-technical skills, abilities and personal characteristics that the ideal person for this particular role would have.

	Essential	Desirable
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General clerical / administrative / SIMS experience 	
Qualification / Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good numeracy and literacy skills. • NVQ Level 2 [or equivalent] or experience in the relevant discipline. • EWC Registration 	
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of relevant policies, and codes of practice. • Understand school roles, responsibilities and your position within these. 	
Skills & Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective use of specialist ICT packages. • Use of relevant equipment / resources. • Good Keyboard skills • Ability to relate well to pupils, colleagues and outside agencies. • Work constructively and positively as part of a team. 	<p>Level 1 Welsh Language skills (Basic reading, writing, speaking and understanding) with the aim of improvement through CPD”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Reading – Can read some basic words and phrases with understanding ·Speaking – Can hold a basic conversation in welsh i.e. basic greetings ·Writing – Can write basic messages on everyday topics

		·Understanding – Can understand parts of a basic conversation
Personal Characteristics		



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

13th FEBRUARY 2020

KEY STAGE 4 AND 5 EXAMINATION RESULTS FOR 2019 AND PROVISIONAL PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL CATEGORISATION FOR 2019/20

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES (COUNCILLOR J ROSSER)

Author: GAYNOR DAVIES, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION
SERVICES (Tel No: 01443 744009)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with the final confirmation of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 examination results for 2018-19 and Primary and Secondary School Categorisation for 2019/20.
- 1.2 To advise members on the significant changes in Welsh Government performance and accountability measures.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the information contained within the report.
- 2.2 Note the action taken to date and the future planned intervention of the Director of Education and Inclusion Services in partnership with Local Authority Education Services and Central South Consortium to support schools currently categorised as amber and red.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure that Cabinet Members are fully aware of the educational performance of our pupils and schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Welsh Government has been developing new evaluation and improvement arrangements to ensure that performance and accountability measures align with the new Curriculum for Wales 2022. It is proposed by Welsh Government that the new arrangements will

assist in raising standards, reducing the attainment gap, and deliver an improved education system in preparation for 2022. These new arrangements are evolving in a planned way to support schools to build a self-improving system and ensure sustained improvements.

- 4.2 Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 outcomes are externally verified through GCSE and GCE Advanced Level examinations which are undertaken at the end of the respective Key Stages.
- 4.3 The local authority analyses examination outcomes for each school and compares school performance across the County Borough. Comparisons are also made against the all Wales averages. For 2019/20, it is possible to ascertain Rhondda Cynon Taf's performance relative to other local authorities on key measures. It is however likely that this comparative data will not be published in future.
- 4.4 When considering Rhondda Cynon Taf's performance relative to the Welsh average it is important to contextualise information and to take into account the socio-economic factors across the 22 Welsh local authorities. Whilst poverty and deprivation are not excuses for educational underperformance, they are factors that influence educational outcomes. In comparing Rhondda Cynon Taf with other local authorities, in terms of eligibility for free school meals, Rhondda Cynon Taf currently has the seventh highest level of statutory school age pupils behind Neath Port Talbot, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Cardiff, Swansea and Merthyr Tydfil. This is a significant shift from 2018, when Rhondda Cynon Taf was ranked as the 3rd highest in Wales in terms of the percentage of learners aged 5-15 eligible for free school meals.

Based on January PLASC 2019 data, there were 20.4% of pupils aged 5-15 known to be eligible for free school meals in Rhondda Cynon Taf, which was significantly above the all Wales average of 18.3%. In addition, Rhondda Cynon Taf has some of the poorest wards in Wales when considering the Welsh Multiple Index of Deprivation data.

- 4.5 Socio-economic measures suggests that a degree of discrepancy between Rhondda Cynon Taf's performance relative to all Wales average outcomes would be predicted given the well documented research that highlights the positive correlation between poverty and poor educational outcomes. Nevertheless, aspirations for our learners remain high.

5. KEY STAGE 4 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- 5.1 Welsh Government is attempting to remove the historic disproportionate emphasis on one or two isolated school performance measures. They have introduced new interim Key Stage 4 (KS4) measures for 2018/19. There is a general move towards a wider range of indicators to better capture the whole learning experience and the progress of all learners, as opposed to a disproportionate focus on particular groups of learners.

5.2 As part of this process of change, Welsh Government has implemented a suite of interim KS4 performance measures. These new measures, based on points scores, will remove the emphasis on threshold measures which have historically resulted in an excessive focus on borderline C/D grade learners. Moving forward, a focus on point scores will reflect a school average of all individual learners' points scores, rather than a percentage attaining a minimum threshold level.

5.3 The KS4 interim measures for summer 2019 are summarised as follows:

- **Capped 9 measure** which includes 3 core measures (literacy, numeracy and science measures) and any other six best qualifications (other than those already contributing to the 3 core measures)
- **Literacy measure** (best of language and literacy)
- **Numeracy measure** (best of mathematics/numeracy)
- **Science measure** (best of science)
- **Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate** measure.

The interim measures are points based rather than focused on the percentage of pupils attaining a particular threshold grade or level. Point score equivalents for the different grades are as follows:

- **A*=58; A=52; B=46; C=40; D=34; E=28; F=22; G=16.**

5.4 Following the Welsh Government announcement in November 2017 regarding early entries, only the results of the first awarding of a complete qualification have counted towards the performance measures for summer 2019 reporting.

5.5 Welsh Government have made changes to the information provided for schools in the All Wales Core Data Sets (AWCDS) to reflect the interim KS4 performance measures.

5.6 In line with the move away from threshold measures, Welsh Government no longer provide analyses on the percentage of learners achieving: individual subjects, including the Welsh Baccalaureate at Foundation or National level, or threshold performance measures, namely the Core Subject Indicator (CSI) or Level 2 threshold.

5.7 Welsh Government have provided analyses of the Level 2 inclusive and Level 1 threshold measures for 2018/19 only. This is due to the fact that there was still a legislative requirement for schools to set targets for KS4 learners against these measures for the 2018/19 academic year. However, this data has been provided to inform school self-evaluation and Welsh Government has strongly advised that legacy measures should not be used for comparative purposes.

5.8 National benchmarking data is no longer provided to allow comparisons with other schools in similar socio-economic circumstances.

- 5.9 The Director of Education in Welsh Government, the Chief Inspector for Estyn and the Chief Executive of the WLGA have sent a joint letter to Cabinet Members, Chairs of Scrutiny, Chief Executives and Directors of Education across Wales to provide a steer on the handling of unverified KS4 examination results for the summer 2019 and the new interim performance measures. The July 2019 letter highlights Welsh Government's view that it is counter-productive for schools to be placed under disproportionate pressure on the basis of individual measures and that focus should be placed on using 'a broad range of un-aggregated data and information' to enable the Council to discharge its statutory duties when reporting on school performance. The communication also recommends that Councils evaluate the performance of individual schools rather than generating aggregated data at local authority level to support and challenge individual schools on their improvement.

Whilst it was intended that comparative data at a local authority level would not be published by Welsh Government, local authority outcomes across Wales were in fact published in December 2019.

6. OVERVIEW OF KEY STAGE 4 PERFORMANCE (2018/19)

6.1 Further detail in relation to the interim measures is provided below:

- The **Capped Points Score** calculates the average of the scores for the best awards for all individual learners in the cohort, capped at a total volume of nine GCSEs or equivalent qualifications (referred to as 'slots') **Three** of the nine slots equate to three GCSEs only in literacy, numeracy and science, with the best grade achieved for each slot from the relevant qualifications. The remaining **six** slots reflect to the points attached to each learner's best remaining six qualifications (excluding those awards that are contributing towards the three subject-specific slots described above). There is no cap on the total volume of non-GCSEs that can contribute towards the 'other six' (non-subject-specific) slots.
- The **literacy measure** calculates the average of the scores for all individual learners in the cohort, taking the best grade from any of the literature or first language Welsh or English GCSEs awarded to a learner.
- The **numeracy measure** calculates the average of the scores for all individual learners in the cohort, taking the best grade from either of the mathematics or mathematics – numeracy GCSEs awarded to a learner.
- The **science measure** calculates the average of the scores for all individual learners in the cohort, taking the best grade from science GCSEs awarded to a learner.
- The **Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate measure** calculates the average of the scores for the Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate awards for all individual learners in the

cohort, whether it is the Foundation (Level 1) or the National (Level 2) award.

6.2 Table 1 provides the verified data for Key Stage 4 for 2019.

Table 1: Verified outcomes on current interim performance measures for Key Stage 4 - 2018/19

KS4	2018	2019	Differential
Capped 9 Points Score RCT	n/a	352	n/a
Capped 9 Points Score Wales	n/a	353.9	n/a
Literacy Points Score RCT	38.6	38.2	-0.4
Literacy Points Score Wales	39.4	39.0	-0.4
Numeracy Points Score RCT	37.2	35.7	-1.5
Numeracy Points Score Wales	38.3	37.1	-1.2
Science Points Score RCT	35.4	35.2	-0.2
Science Points Score Wales	36.8	36.8	0
Welsh Baccalaureate Skill Challenge Certificate – Points Score RCT	36.1	37.9	+1.8
Welsh Baccalaureate Skill Challenge Certificate – Points Score Wales	36.5	36.4	-0.1

Please note that as the interim measures are new for 2019, Welsh Government has recalculated 2018 datasets in the form of new, headline interim measures. However, this refitted data for 2018 does not take into account the 'first award only' approach to Key Stage 4 performance measures that has been introduced for the first time for 2019 reporting purposes. Prior to 2018/19, the best result for each Year 11 pupil in each subject was used instead. This clearly impacts on the comparability of this 2019 data with previous years.

The comparative data should therefore be considered with caution as it reports measures that were not in place at the time that the cohort was in situ. The datasets are not directly comparable for this reason.

Outcomes on all measures were only slightly below the national average, with the exception of the performance on the Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate which was above the all Wales average. Performance on most measures do not deviate too significantly from 2018, when considering the new measures and the recalculated data for last year.

Our performance relative to the other 22 local authorities, based on the new interim measures is as follows: Capped 9 (10th); Literacy Points Score (12th); Numeracy Points Score (17th); Science Points Score (17th); Welsh Baccalaureate (6th). Further improvement in Science and Numeracy outcomes would be beneficial in the 2020 summer series. Modelled outcomes based on Efsm levels suggest that performance on

the Capped 9 and Welsh Baccalaureate was better than predicted and literacy, numeracy and science outcomes were very marginally below modelled expectations and the all Wales average rate.

- 6.3 During the autumn term, Council officers worked closely with headteachers and the Central South Consortium to analyse the data so as to evaluate what has gone well and to identify priorities for improvement. This analysis has been undertaken at a school level and subject basis to inform self-evaluation and school improvement planning. Support has been put in place to ensure that underperforming schools are supported to make the necessary progress, and, where necessary, challenged to ensure that timely improvements are made. Challenge has included issuing pre-warning statutory notices to a small number of secondary schools.

An analysis of outcomes for vulnerable groups will also be undertaken in partnership with schools to ensure that they are targeting their resources and interventions appropriately. Further progress is clearly needed across the board to ensure that outcomes are improved at this time of unprecedented reform in Education. The local authority needs to ensure that an appropriate curriculum is made available for all Key Stage 4 learners that best suits their needs and that the teaching provided is of the highest standard.

7. PROGRESS AT KEY STAGE 5

- 7.1 Table 2 outlines verified Key Stage 5 outcomes. Data suggests that there has been progress in the percentage of all learners achieving the level 3 threshold, including boys and girls.

Table 2: Verified Key Stage 5 Outcomes (Level 3 Threshold)

Year		All	Boys	Girls
		Entered a volume equivalent to 2 A levels who achieved the level 3 threshold %	Entered a volume equivalent to 2 A levels who achieved the level 3 threshold %	Entered a volume equivalent to 2 A levels who achieved the level 3 threshold %
2018/19	RCT	97.8	96.5	98.9
	Wales	97.9	97.3	98.4
2017/18	RCT	96.2	95.0	97.0
	Wales	97.6	96.7	98.3
2016/17	RCT	96.3	95.7	96.7
	Wales	97.1	96.2	97.9

7.2 Performance of girls on the Level 3 threshold in Rhondda Cynon Taf demonstrates significant progress and is stronger than the national average. The performance of all learners is on a par with all Wales average outcomes.

7.3 As can be seen in Table 3 performance has dipped this academic year on the average wider point score measure for all learners, but particularly for boys. In line with the national averages, girls continue to significantly outperform boys on the average wider points score measure and performance for girls remained fairly stable on this measure across 2018/19.

Table 3: Verified key stage 5 outcomes on the average wider points score for Key Stage 5 – 2019

Year		All	Boys	Girls
		Average wider points score for pupils aged 17	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17
2018/19	RCT	691.92	631.4	740.6
	Wales	741.3	693.5	781.1
2017/18	RCT	723.8	691.4	746.1
	Wales	740.1	691.8	780.9
2016/17	RCT	677.6	615.9	723.5
	Wales	730.6	681.2	773.2

7.4 Data in Table 4 suggests that the percentage of learners who achieved 3A*-A and 3A*-C grades in key stage 5 decreased by 0.6%age points and 6.0%age points in 2018/19. In line with national averages, girls outperformed boys on both 3A*-A and 3A*-C measures.

Table 4: Verified outcomes on 3A*-A and 3A*-C Key Stage 5 - 2019

Year		All		Boys		Girls	
		Percentage of Pupils entering a volume equivalent of 2 A levels who achieved 3 A*-A grades	Percentage of Pupils entering a volume equivalent of 2 A levels who achieved 3 A*-C grades	Percentage of Pupils entering a volume equivalent of 2 A levels who achieved 3 A*-A grades	Percentage of Pupils entering a volume equivalent of 2 A levels who achieved 3 A*-C grades	Percentage of Pupils entering a volume equivalent of 2 A levels who achieved 3 A*-A grades	Percentage of Pupils entering a volume equivalent of 2 A levels who achieved 3 A*-C grades
2018/19	RCT	9.6	48.3	6.8	40.9	11.7	54.0
	Wales	13.2	58.4	11.7	51.1	14.5	64.1
2017/18	RCT	10.2	54.3	8.5	43.8	11.5	61.9
	Wales	13.4	57.9	13.0	50.1	13.8	64.2
2016/17	RCT	5.5	45.1	6.4	33.5	4.8	53.5
	Wales	10.5	54.7	10.3	47.6	10.6	60.5

8. PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL CATEGORISATION

- 8.1 The current school categorisation model has changed significantly since 2016 but will remain for the immediate future. The categorisation system will in future need to evolve to fit with the new Evaluation and Improvement arrangements.
- 8.2 **Step One:** consisting of data analysis in relation to standards and performance has been removed.
- 8.3 **Step Two:** This judgment based on the school's ability and capacity to self-improve is now central in coming to a view on a school support category. The process begins with the school's own self-evaluation. The judgement on capacity to improve is to do with the school's ability to drive its own improvement for the future and has a strong focus on leadership, learning and teaching.
- 8.4 Following consideration of the self-evaluation report and relevant evidence relating to school leadership, the performance of all learners and groups of learners and the quality of teaching and learning within the school, the governing body, together with the challenge advisor, will agree the judgement for the school's capacity to improve.
- 8.5 **Step Three:** this judgement will lead to a colour categorisation of the school which will trigger a bespoke programme of support, challenge and intervention.
- 8.6 The categories of support are:
- **Green** - these are our best schools who:
 - know themselves well and identify and implement their own priorities for improvement;
 - are rewarded by greater autonomy with limited, if any, interaction with challenge advisors; and
 - have the capacity to lead others effectively (school to school support).
 - **Yellow** – these are our good schools who:
 - will know and understand most of the areas in need of improvement; have many aspects of the schools performance which are self-improving; and
 - will receive limited challenge and support meetings deployed according to need.
 - **Amber** – these are our schools in need of improvement who:
 - do not know and understand all the areas in need of improvement;
 - have many aspects of the schools performance which are not improving quickly enough; and

- will receive time limited, focused challenge and intervention to support improvement; and
 - be subject to termly progress meetings with senior challenge advisor.
- **Red** – these are our schools in need of greatest improvement who:
 - will receive critical intervention;
 - receive an automatic warning letter from the local authority and subsequent use of statutory powers where necessary;
 - trigger intensive and effective collaboration between local authority and consortium;
 - will receive time limited, focused challenge and intervention to support improvement; and
 - be subject to half-termly progress meetings with the senior challenge advisor.

8.7 A summary of Rhondda Cynon Taf’s categorisation, subject to National Moderation, is shown below:

Table 5: School categorisation outcomes for 2019/20

Category	Mainstream Primary Schools						Secondary Schools					
	No of Schools			%			No of Schools			%		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
Green	38	36	40	36.9	38.7	43.5	4	5	5	23.5	29.4	29.4
Yellow	59	48	42	57.3	51.6	45.7	10	7	7	59.0	41.2	41.2
Amber	5	6	10	4.9	6.5	10.9	1	3	3	5.9	17.6	17.6
Red	1	3	0	1.0	3.2	0	2	2	2	11.8	11.8	11.8

There has been a 4.8% increase in the percentage of schools categorised as green at primary level, and this is the highest level of green schools achieved in the past 3 years. A decrease in the percentage of primary schools requiring yellow support is evident during 2019/20. Whilst there are more schools requiring amber support at primary level this academic year this has been necessary in a number of cases due to interim leadership arrangements (e.g. acting headteacher posts etc). There are no primary schools categorised as red. There has been a significant reduction in schools requiring red support at primary level due to the removal of 3 schools from Estyn statutory categories (including significant improvement and special measures). This is a significant achievement.

For secondary schools the overall position has remained relatively stable, although there have been 2 positive changes in categorisation at secondary level (one from yellow to green and another from amber to yellow) and 2 negative changes (from green to yellow and yellow to amber). The proportion of secondary schools categorised as requiring the greatest improvement and red support has remained stable.

8.8 The Central South Consortium’s Framework for Challenge and Support sets out the response from the School Improvement Service to schools

in each of the four categories, with the greatest support and challenge targeted at the amber and red schools. For the amber and red schools, the diagnosis of need for improvement undertaken by the challenge advisor with the school will drive the work within the school. The challenge advisor will provide the core allocation of contact according to the school's category and will broker the required additional support through the commissioning function of the school improvement service working closely with the strategic advisors as necessary. Senior officers from the local authority, are involved school improvement forums and progress meetings for all amber and red schools. The Director of Education is involved in termly progress meetings with red schools, and half-termly meetings with amber schools.

- 8.9 To summarise, there has been a growth in the number of schools requiring the least amount of support (green) and a deterioration in the number of school categorised as requiring the highest level of support (red). A decrease in the overall number of schools requiring red support reflects the progress made in improving our schools' causing significant concern at primary level.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 This is an information report. No Equality Impact Assessment screening form is required.

10. CONSULTATION

- 10.1 This is an information report, no consultation is required.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no financial implications.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 12.1 None at present.

13. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP

- 13.1 Educational performance has a clear link to the Council's priority of Building a Strong Economy. Improved educational performance will have a positive impact on this priority.

14. CONCLUSION

- 14.1 The new interim performance measures, based on points scores, have removed the emphasis on threshold measures and the associated negative unintended consequences previously associated with these. Namely the narrowing of curriculum choice, the excessive focus on particular group of learners at the expense of others and the competition

created across schools and local authorities which has mitigated against a culture of self-improving schools.

- 14.2 In light of this shift in emphasis in performance measures and reporting, moving forward a wider range of performance measures and contextual information will be utilised during 2019/20 to inform self-evaluation and school improvement planning and to make judgements about school effectiveness.
- 14.3 Provisional performance outcomes on the new interim Key Stage 4 measures suggests that there has been a slight dip in standards in 2019 on most measures. However, it is difficult to make meaningful comparisons across 2018 and 2019 datasets due to the fact that the 2019 outcomes include the 'first award' data only. This is not the case for the re-calculated 2018 datasets. Nevertheless, provisional data suggests that there is scope for further improvements in standards in 2019.
- 14.4 A continued focus on improving leadership and the quality of teaching and learning in our schools is required so that standards can continue to improve and the gap between vulnerable groups (including efsm/nfsm and boys and girls) is narrowed.
- 14.5 Provisional school categorisation outcomes overall suggests improvement in the numbers of primary schools requiring green and red support. Categorisation at secondary level has remained stable overall over 2017/18 and 2018/19.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee-

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Background Papers-

None

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET
13th FEBRUARY 2020

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR J ROSSER.

AUTHOR: Gaynor Davies – Director of Education and Inclusion Services

Background papers – None.

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

13th FEBRUARY 2020

ITU COLLABORATION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROSPERITY, DEVELOPMENT AND FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (COUNCILLOR CRIMMINGS)

**Authors: Roger Waters – Service Director; Frontline Services
Charlie Nelson – Transportation Manager**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet approval for the Integrated Transport Units of both Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Councils to work collaboratively to create a centre of excellence for the delivery of passenger transport services across both local authorities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council officers work with Caerphilly County Borough Council to explore the creation of a centre of excellence for the delivery of passenger transport services across Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 2.2 It is recommended that a further report be brought back to Cabinet on the outcome of that review for their formal consideration at a future date.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council is continually reviewing and adapting services in light of reducing funds from the Government. Collaboration with neighbouring local authorities helps to improve the resilience of service delivery, ensuring that our residents continue to receive the best services.
- 3.2 Ensuring that the two councils are joined up will help to deliver the most efficient cost effective passenger transport service to residents and users. A joint management structure will identify and embed best practice, establish common processes and share of resources to create

a single passenger transport centre of excellence, providing services across both councils.

- 3.3 With proposals for local government reorganisation being costly and disruptive, the current preference is toward the collaboration of service provision and back office functions between existing local authorities. The creation of the Cardiff Capital Region is a step toward the creation of regional Joint Transport Authorities. Developing a centre of passenger transport excellence, based around two of its strongest councils, offers a foundation on which to expand and provide services on a wider regional footprint for and on behalf of other councils.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Welsh Government wants strong and empowered local government which can provide bold, determined and focused local leadership. The vision is for empowered local authorities that have the freedom, powers and values that drive them to look to the future, learning from the past but not stuck in it. Success will be measured by how much is being done better and the positive difference this makes to people's lives.
- 4.2 Their vision for local government is one that builds on its current strengths, reinvigorating not reinventing. It looks to those councils with the strength and scope to be bold and ambitious to work in the best interests of the communities they serve to work with other like-minded councils and make a difference, using public money more effectively.
- 4.3 The recent Welsh Government White Paper; Improving Public Transport, makes a case for regional working via Joint Transport Authorities. Whilst it is understood that this is not being taken forward as part of the drafting for the Bus (Wales) Bill, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill 2019 makes provision for corporate joint committees to be established to support regional working and collaboration in areas such as transport.
- 4.4 In this period of ongoing austerity, the challenge requires a long term approach that transforms service delivery. Joint working helps to maximise opportunities and simplifies the complexities of repetition, reducing administrative burden, building on strengths and providing resilience.
- 4.5 In parallel, there are growing pressures on staff resources, particularly at the managerial level, where on a Wales-wide basis the pool of talent continues to diminish through retirement and increased competition for such managers from fellow councils, Transport for Wales and transport consultancies. Both councils have been affected by such pressures.
- 4.6 With this in mind, Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf Council officers have been discussing the potential for the creation of a joint Integrated

Transport Unit (ITU). Both councils already have well-run and adequately resourced ITUs providing services for public bus services, home to school transport and Social Services transport for vulnerable adults and children. The proposal is to underpin the good work that each council undertakes through its respective ITUs, and create resilience and capacity that will ensure business continuity.

- 4.7 This potential pooling of resources, following a review could enable a greater resilience and long-term stability of service delivery, sharing of specialist skills, greater opportunities for personal development, business continuity, career development and the potential to scale up to provide services across a wider geographical footprint.
- 4.8 The current review proposal envisages a virtual team based at the respective offices of the two councils. Consideration will be given to co-location as part of the wider regional agenda in the future.

5. PROPOSAL

- 5.1 It is envisaged the creation of the Centre of Excellence for the delivery of passenger transport services across Rhondda Cynon Taf and Caerphilly would initially operate on the following model.
- 5.2 A joint management structure would be put in place to manage the respective ITUs of each council, and by working together, the two councils would share resources to explore the creation of a centre of excellence for the delivery of passenger transport services across Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 5.3 Both councils are acting from a position of strength with well-run and adequately resourced ITUs. Caerphilly's ITU Team Leader and Rhondda Cynon Taf's Transportation Manager would work together under an Memorandum of Understanding (see appendix 1), and form part of a joint management team, which would be supported by Caerphilly's Transportation Engineering Manager and Rhondda Cynon Taf's Service Director – Frontline Services.
- 5.4 A joint board/steering group would be established with Cabinet/Executive member and officer representation from each council covering Audit, Education, Finance, Human Resources, Social Services and Transport requirements to ensure that there is an even allocation of management and administrative resources across both councils, based on their current proportions. Terms of Reference for the joint board/steering group will need to be prepared and agreed.
- 5.5 The joint management team would be responsible for delivering performance reports (as required in the business and delivery plan) to the joint board/steering group, who will provide direction and oversight,

and have the responsibility for reviewing performance and reporting back to their respective councils, supported by the joint management team.

- 5.6 The joint management team through, and working with the joint board/steering group, would be responsible for developing and agreeing a business and delivery plan to transform the service across the two councils into a single combined entity, where staff would work flexibly across council boundaries, using common processes to deliver excellent passenger transport, such as contract terms and conditions, fleet utilisation and procurement strategies, contract monitoring, DBS checks and clearance, eligibility assessment, infrastructure management, performance indicators etc.
- 5.7 At this stage, where harmonising processes and procedures are mutually beneficial, each ITU would remain independent and self-sufficient. Only when a full 12 months of data is available will a full and clear picture be available on how the collaboration is performing against the original business and delivery plan.
- 5.8 For clarity; Policy decisions (such as eligibility criteria for school transport) will remain entirely a matter for the individual constituent councils. The joint transport unit will act as a centre of excellence in managing transport services in accordance with the prevailing policies of the individual councils, or any other councils that may commission the unit.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment Screening Form has been completed and not identified any negative or adverse impact upon the vulnerable groups that rely on the passenger transport services delivered by the two councils. A full Equality Impact Assessment has not therefore been carried out.

7. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 Cabinet approval is sought to advance discussions with Caerphilly Council in respect of the creation of a centre of excellence as outlined above and the development of a memorandum of understanding to establish and direct a joint management structure, overseen by a joint board/steering group (a draft of which is appended to the report).
- 7.2 There are no immediate planned personnel implications arising from the report. However, if established and working to the satisfaction of both authorities, a review of the future structure of the organisation would be considered. Any proposal(s) arising would be the subject of a future report to Members.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report beyond the existing ITU budgets established by each council, as there would be no cross subsidy between the respective ITUs. Any significant service change initiatives within the parameters of this proposal (e.g. investment in common management information systems) will be subject to further business case justification.
- 8.2 The respective units are responsible for managing significant transport budgets across a range of services and functions and will have a combined gross revenue budget of £35 million.
- 8.3 This breaks down across three main service delivery areas as follows:

LA	RCTCBC	CCBC
Public transport (bus)	£9,033,000	£5,596,000
Home to School	£10,246,000	£7,116,000
Social Services	£1,287,000	£1,500,000
Total	£20,566,000	£14,212,000

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The legal implications aligned to this proposal will evolve as discussions develop. These will be fully reported to Members following completion of the review. The proposal supports the underlying aims of the Welsh Government Green Paper Consultation Document “Strengthening Local Government: Delivering for People”, which through the provision for corporate joint committees to be established to support regional working and collaboration in areas such as transport, are being taken forward by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill 2019.

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

- 10.1 The delivery of passenger transport services support and promote the Council’s Corporate Plan priorities for People – Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone, Place – Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and Economy – Building a strong economy.
- 10.2 These in turn support the seven well-being goals of the Well-being of Future generations (Wales) Act 2015. This proposal contributes to the Well-being Goals and is consistent with the five ways of working, as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act.

- 10.3 By looking at an alternative model, working with Caerphilly under a joint management structure will deliver and manage the councils' passenger transport requirements in a more integrated and efficient manner, in a way that makes the best and most sustainable use of our limited and decreasing resources.
- 10.4 Long term resourcing of operation and management solutions of this specialised service provision allows for more effective and predictable resource/ financial commitments going forward. The jointly managed service helps to prevent less sustainable travel options being used thus contributing to the well-being of its communities. It forms part of an overall strategy for the integration of local and regional transport systems where sustainable public transport, contributing to a low carbon future, is the option of choice.
- 10.5 Collaboration with other organisations and local authorities enables a more effective, efficient and inclusive service which delivers greater benefits to the community, increasing their resilience and providing feelings of being safe and involved in the using the network. Users and residents will have a wider range and choice of passenger transport services, with improved access to employment, health facilities, education and training, social, leisure and retail opportunities. Communities will become more cohesive and regenerated, as new homes are built and jobs created, fuelling network growth and use.
- 10.6 Good transport services are of great benefit to residents, businesses and visitors. Improved transport links provide economic growth and more employment opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities, so that they can achieve their aspirations, improving their life chances, and preventing and removing themselves and their families from poverty. Improved service delivery makes services more attractive to use, reducing the need for private transport at peak times, contributing to better air quality and improving the local environment.
- 10.7 Collaboration with other councils involves working together towards shared goals, jointly making decisions, and pooling resources through an integrated approach. This avoids duplication and allows partners to develop complementary approaches that deliver a sustainable and effective network of passenger transport services, which will increase user satisfaction and be of long-term benefit to residents.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The creation of a joint ITU with Caerphilly with an innovative, responsive and cost effective approach to passenger transport service delivery would meet the objectives of both councils and contribute to reducing their respective carbon footprints.

- 11.2 The pooling of resources under a memorandum of understanding, overseen by a joint board/steering group, will enable a structure to be built that will provide a lean and integrated transportation service, focussed on the delivery of a safe, efficient and legislatively compliant range of passenger transport services to a broad range of clients, that has close working relationships with key partners, clear and effective cost control, and makes best use of the financial and staff resources for their respective councils.
- 11.3 This model, through further collaboration, would have the capacity and capability to be scaled up into a sub-Regional/Regional ITU within 2 years.

Memorandum of Understanding – ITU Passenger Transport Services

Principle Points of Agreement

- CCBC and RCTCBC agree to create a centre of excellence for the delivery of passenger transport services across Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- There will be a joint management structure to manage the respective Integrated Transport Units (ITUs) of each Council.
- The purpose of the joint management structure is to share management resources across the two ITUs.
- The joint management team will identify and embed best practice, establish common processes and the sharing of resources to create a single passenger transport centre of excellence, providing passenger transport services across both Councils.
- The aim will be to build a structure that through further collaboration has the capacity and capability to be scaled up into a sub-Regional/Regional ITU within 2 years.

Background

- Both Councils are acting from a position of strength with well-run and adequately resourced ITUs.
- The wider direction of travel is towards the creation of regional Joint Transport Authorities (WG White Paper).

Proposal

- The proposal is to underpin the good work that each Council undertakes through its respective ITUs, and to create resilience and capacity to ensure business continuity and to take on additional services beyond the boundaries of Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- Develop a centre of excellence for the delivery of passenger transport services that is capable of expansion to provide services on a wider regional footprint for and on behalf of other Councils in the Cardiff Capital Region.
- That CCBC's ITU Team Leader and RCTCBC's Transportation Manager work under an MOU as part of a joint management team, supported by CCBC's Transportation Engineering Manager and RCTCBC's Service Director – Frontline Services.

- A joint board/steering group will be established with member and officer representation from each Council covering Audit, Education, Finance, Human Resources, Social Services and Transport requirements to ensure that there is an even allocation of management and administrative resources across both Councils, based on their current proportions. Terms of Reference for the joint board/steering group will need to be prepared and agreed.
- The joint management team will be responsible for delivering performance reports (as required in the business and delivery plan) to the joint board/steering group, who will provide direction and oversight, and have the responsibility for reviewing performance and reporting back to their respective Councils, supported by the joint management team.
- The joint management team through, and working with the joint board/steering group, will be responsible for developing and agreeing a business and delivery plan to transform the service across the two Councils into a single combined entity, where staff would work flexibly across Council boundaries, using common processes to deliver excellent passenger transport, such as contract terms and conditions, fleet utilisation and procurement strategies, contract monitoring, DBS checks and clearance, eligibility assessment, infrastructure management, performance indicators, GDPR, data sharing protocols etc.

Output

- Create a joint/regional ITU that is acknowledged for excellence in innovative, responsive and cost effective passenger transport service delivery that meet the objectives of both Council's and contribute to reducing their respective carbon footprints.
- To provide a lean and integrated transportation service which is focussed on the delivery of a safe, efficient and legislatively compliant range of passenger transport services to a broad range of clients, that has close working relationships with key partners, clear and effective cost control, and makes best use of the financial and staff resources for their respective Councils.

Joint Working, Responsibilities and Delivery

- The joint management team will have responsibility for all passenger transport activities undertaken for and on behalf of each Council, deputising for each other when necessary and appropriate.
- The joint management team will prepare the business and delivery plan that reflects the direction and policies of each Council, identifying performance indicators/management framework to ensure the achievement of the objectives and performance targets as set out therein.

- The joint management team will investigate, identify opportunities, implement and manage the delivery of an innovative, environmentally responsible, high quality, cost effective and fully integrated passenger transport service that meets each Council's needs seamlessly.
- The joint management team will be responsible for the financial and budget management of passenger transport services across each Council.
- The joint management team will provide specialist and technical advice and guidance on legislative and regulatory requirements, ensuring that the legislative requirements, policies and procedures, regulations, regulatory requirements and minimum standards placed upon each Council in the delivery of passenger transport services are complied with and met.
- The joint management team will work closely with the client Directorates within each Council to clearly define respective roles and responsibilities in order to ensure that their requirements are met and services are delivered in a manner that is more customer focused and client led.
- The joint management team will develop policy, financial and operational systems, and liaise with partners, making recommendations to each Council as necessary to deliver better and more integrated services.
- The joint management team will ensure the provision of professional supervision and appraisal to members of the combined ITU in order to achieve the service aims and objectives of both Councils and ensure their continuous professional development and improvement.
- The joint management team will communicate effectively in a customer focussed manner with Councillors, Assembly Members and MPs, members of the public, customers, services users, Council departments, and professionals from other agencies, providing briefing and support for senior management and elected members from each Council, and ensuring that complaints, queries and requests are responded to in accordance with the policies and direction of each Council.
- The joint management team will act as client in the development, delivery and financial oversight of passenger transport capital projects on behalf of the Councils
- The joint management team will identify other collaborative opportunities with Councils across the Cardiff Capital Region to develop opportunities for greater integration in the delivery of a consistent, more efficient and effective service.
- The joint management team will participate in effective partnership working and engagement with Welsh Government, Transport for Wales, transport

providers, other local authorities and voluntary organisations, contributing to and working on all aspects of regional and Wales wide passenger transport on behalf of both Councils.

Summary of the Draft Business and Delivery Plan

Streamlined DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checking process

- Develop a DBS process that will streamline the current procedure for carrying out DBS checks across the two authorities.
- Create a shared workspace that enables both CCBC and RCTCBC to share DBS data.
- Agree a combined Privacy Notice that will allow the transfer of DBS checks between the two authorities, reducing the duplication of checks for those companies that work for both CCBC and RCTCBC.

Indicative timescale for implementation: 3 – 6 months

Adopt common processes

- Carry out a best practice review on current policies and processes, and adopt a common approach between the two authorities that builds upon and uses Welsh Government Guidance as a minimum. This could include education transport, disabled concessionary bus pass entitlement – including companion passes, terms and conditions of passenger transport contracts.

Indicative timescale for implementation: 12 – 24 months

Education transport – Annual September project plan

- Carry out a best practice review on education transport project plans for the return to school each September, and adopt the most effective processes that reduce the large burden on staffing resources during the summer months. This will also reduce the risk of error when applying education transport policy, and allow resources to be focussed on implementing short notice transport requirements e.g. SEN transport.

Indicative timescale for implementation: 12 – 24 months (two academic years)

Increased procurement benefits

- Identify opportunities to expand the joint purchasing agreement for season tickets on local bus services.
- Develop a joint bus stop infrastructure framework.
- Expand the number of transport operators that are available to tender for both authorities.
- Increase the quality of transport operators that provide contracted services to both authorities.

- Review current procurement processes and systems and adopt common functionalities.
- Develop opportunities for cross boundary tendering on contracted and supported services, increasing the potential for greater contractor fleet utilisation.

Indicative timescale for implementation: 6 – 24 months

Bus stop infrastructure and publicity

- Carry out a best practice review on current methods of bus service promotion and provision of public transport information, and adopt the most effective and informative formats.
- Share staff resources to design bus service publicity.
- Adopt a minimum common policy for new bus stops.
- Develop a shared workspace that enables both CCBC and RCTCBC to operate a bus stop infrastructure and publicity database to assist in the maintaining of bus stops/shelters, with shared staff resources being used to maintain the database records. This includes communicating bus stop details with PTI Cymru.

Indicative timescale for implementation: 6 – 24 months

Concessionary bus pass administration

- Share staff resources to administer the concessionary bus pass scheme e.g. operator re-imburement, application processing - including determining entitlement; issuing lost/stolen replacements; identifying and managing fraud etc.

The extent and indicative timescale for this will be dependent on the long term arrangements through TfW.

Bus network management

- Share staff resources to co-ordinate and manage changes to the bus network.
- Review operator service changes and identify alternative provision.
- Implement replacement services following road closures.
- Procure tendered bus services.

Indicative timescale for implementation: 12 – 24 months

Training

- Adopt a common training requirement for contractors through terms and conditions of contracts.
- Identify, procure and arrange joint training sessions/courses.

- Sharing of course costs.
- Increased staff development through joint training opportunities and exposure to new/different ways of working.

Indicative timescale for implementation: 6 – 24 months

IT systems

- Carry out a best practice review on currently used IT systems e.g. route mapping software and information databases; and subject to cost impact, adopt the most beneficial systems that will improve the productivity of both services.

Indicative timescale for implementation: 12 – 24+ months

Greater utilisation of staffing skills and resources, and retention of key staff

- Identify and develop service improvements by utilising staff with specific skills sets to the best effect across both services.
- Utilise staffing resources for greater joint authority benefits, by reducing the duplication of tasks e.g. contract monitoring at schools and centres where both authorities operate contracted education and social services transport, and on local bus service monitoring on routes that operate cross boundary routes.

Indicative timescale for implementation: 6 – 12 months

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

13TH FEBRUARY 2020

**SUPPORTING TOWN AND RETAIL BUSINESSES IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF –
LOCAL BUSINESS RATE REDUCTION SCHEME**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS
WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR M NORRIS)**

Author(s): MR MATTHEW PHILLIPS, HEAD OF SERVICE (REVENUES & BENEFITS)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Cabinet with the results of the consultation process on a local Business Rate Reduction Scheme for Rhondda Cynon Taf and an update on the continuation of the Welsh Government High Street and Retail Rate Relief (HSRR) Scheme for 2020/21.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
- a) Note the outcome of the consultation exercise as set out in paragraph 7;
 - b) Note the continuation of the Welsh Government High Street and Retail Rate Relief Scheme for the year for 2020/21; and
 - c) Consider whether, and if so how, they wish to proceed with the proposed local Business Rate Reduction Scheme for 2020/21.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide further support to town centre and retail businesses within Rhondda Cynon Taf as part of the package of support as set out in the report of the Service Director of Prosperity and Development presented to Cabinet on 8th May 2019.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 This purpose of the overall package of support to town centre businesses is set out in detail in the Cabinet report of 8th May 2019 and covers a wide range of actions that are intended to deliver on the Councils commitment to support the regeneration of town centres and encourage investment in the high street economy, as set out in the Councils Corporate Plan.

- 4.2 With regard to business rates, the report requested that officers develop a scheme and report back to a future Cabinet meeting for consideration and if appropriate, agreement of that scheme.
- 4.3 On 21st November 2019, Cabinet considered the details of a proposed Local Business Rate Relief scheme and agreed to initiate a consultation on the proposed scheme.
- 4.4 The consultation began on 2nd December 2019 and closed on 27th January 2020. The results are set out at Appendix 3 of this report.

5. PROPOSED LOCAL BUSINESS RATE REDUCTION SCHEME

- 5.1 On 23rd January 2020, WG issued the HSRR scheme details and guidance, which confirms that the 2020/21 scheme would be unchanged to the 2019/20 scheme. That is, the HSRR scheme would offer a maximum payment of £2,500 to all qualifying businesses with a Rateable Value of £50,000 or less.
- 5.2 In order to support our town centre and retail businesses in 2020/21 it is proposed that a local discretionary relief be provided in **addition** to the WG HSRR of up to a maximum of £300 per qualifying business. The qualifying criteria of the HSRR shall be applied. It is estimated that 485 businesses in Rhondda Cynon Taf would benefit from this further support.
- 5.3 In cases where the “net” rates bill (following the award of HSRR and any other applicable reliefs) is less than £300, the rates bill will be reduced to zero.
- 5.4 Subject to the decision of Cabinet, the local Business Rate Relief would be shown on the 2020/21 Annual Rates bill, due to be posted to all ratepayers in March 2020, along with any other applicable reliefs, thereby providing local businesses with surety with regard to their liability for the forthcoming financial year, that is, it would avoid/minimise any unnecessary re-billing.
- 5.5 The list of the types of businesses able to qualify for the relief is set out at Appendix 1 with those non-qualifying businesses set out at Appendix 2.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no equality and diversity implications.

7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 A consultation exercise on this proposal took place between 2nd December 2019 and 27th January 2020.
- 7.2 The consultation process comprised an on-line questionnaire, complemented by social media activity promoting and signposting.
- 7.3 The feedback is attached at Appendix 3 to this report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 The Council has included the resource requirement in its Medium Term Financial Plan to fund this scheme.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The proposed local Business Rates Relief Scheme is in accordance with the Council's statutory powers under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.
- 9.2 For the scheme to be applied in Rhondda Cynon Taf, the Council needs to formally resolve to adopt the scheme locally in exercise of its discretionary powers under section 47(1) (a) of the 1988 Act and the Director of Finance and Digital Services will administer the scheme and make the necessary determinations in accordance with the Council's 'officer scheme of delegation'.

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

- 10.1 The proposals are aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan priorities, one of which is 'Building a strong economy', and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and in particular "A more prosperous Wales".

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 This local discretionary business rates relief scheme would provide important additional financial support for local businesses to meet their 2020/21 rate liability and forms part of a wider package of support intended to create and maintain vibrant town centres across Rhondda Cynon Taf, which is something that this Council has committed to in its Corporate Plan.

Appendix 1

Examples of the types of retail premises that **may** qualify for assistance under the Wales High Street and Retail Relief Scheme:

- Properties that are being used for the sale of goods to visiting members of the public:-
 - Shops (such as: florist, bakers, butchers, grocers, greengrocers, jewellers, stationers, off licence, newsagents, hardware stores, supermarkets, etc.)
 - Opticians
 - Pharmacies
 - Post offices
 - Furnishing shops/ display rooms (such as: carpet shops, double glazing, garage doors)
 - Car/ caravan show rooms
 - Second hand car lots
 - Markets
 - Petrol stations
 - Garden centres
 - Art galleries (where art is for sale/hire)
- Properties that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:-
 - Hair and beauty services
 - Shoe repairs/ key cutting
 - Travel agents
 - Ticket offices e.g. for theatre
 - Dry cleaners
 - Launderettes
 - PC/ TV/ domestic appliance repair
 - Funeral directors
 - Photo processing
 - DVD/ video rentals
 - Tool hire
 - Car hire
 - Cinemas
 - Estate and letting agents
- Properties that are being used for the sale of food and / or drink to visiting members of the public:-
 - Restaurants, including drive through/drive in restaurants
 - Takeaways
 - Sandwich shops
 - Cafés
 - Coffee shops
 - Pubs
 - Wine Bars

Appendix 2

Examples of the types of retail premises that **will not** qualify for assistance under the Local Business Rates Relief Scheme:

- Properties being used wholly or mainly for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:
 - Financial services (e.g. banks, building societies, cash points, ATMs, bureaux de change, payday lenders, betting shops, pawn brokers)
 - Medical services (e.g. vets, dentists, doctors, osteopaths, chiropractors)
 - Professional services (e.g. solicitors, accountants, insurance agents, financial advisers, tutors)
 - Post office sorting office
 - Tourism accommodation, e.g. B&Bs, hotel accommodation and caravan parks
 - Sports clubs
 - Children's play centres
 - Day nurseries
 - Outdoor activity centres
 - Gyms
 - Kennels and catteries
 - Show homes and marketing suites
 - Employment agencies

In addition, the following properties will not be eligible to relief under the scheme:

- a) Properties with a rateable value of more than £50,000
- b) Properties that are not occupied
- c) Properties that are owned, rented or managed by a local authority
- d) Properties that are in receipt of mandatory charitable relief

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Proposed local business rate reduction scheme

In order to further support our town centre and retail businesses for 2020/21 it is proposed that a new local discretionary Non Domestic Rate (NDR) Relief be provided of up to a maximum of £300 per qualifying business. Based on current information, it is estimated that 485 businesses would benefit from this support.

The Council already has a number of packages in place to support our valued Town Centres and Retail Business and this proposed new discretionary NDR relief provides businesses with additional help in paying their NDR for 2020/21.

This will be in addition to other support already available including the Welsh Governments High Street and Retail Rates Relief Scheme (HSRR). The same qualifying criteria as the HSRR will be applied.

Consultation results

- The online survey was live for 8 weeks between December 2 2019 and January 27 2020
- 26 people responded to the consultation online
- 96.2% of respondents agreed that the Council should continue to support town centres and retail businesses within Rhondda Cynon Taf
- 84.6% of respondents agreed that providing additional support towards the payment of Non Domestic (Business) Rates through a local discretionary relief is a positive way of helping sustain Town Centres and Retail Businesses
- 76.9% of respondents agreed with The Council's proposal to use the same qualifying criteria for this local scheme as that used for the Welsh Government High Street and Retail Rate Relief Scheme

- 62.5% of respondents agreed that £300 per qualifying business is an appropriate discretionary relief

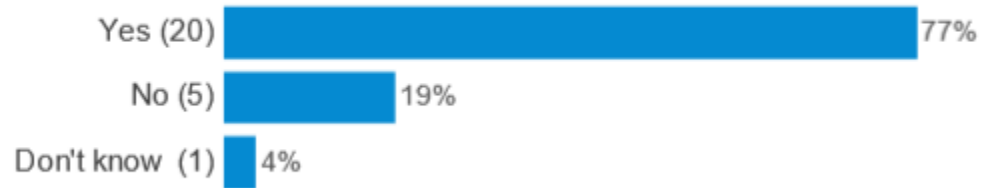
Do you agree that the Council should continue to support our Town Centres and Retail Businesses within Rhondda Cynon Taf ?



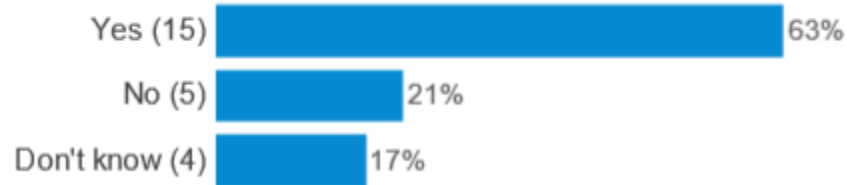
Do you agree that providing additional support towards the payment of Non Domestic (Business) Rates through a local discretionary relief is a positive way of helping sustain our Town Centres and Retail Businesses?



Do you agree that the above qualifying criteria is appropriate?



Do you think that £300 per qualifying business is appropriate, taking into account the council's other service pressures and investment priorities?



Views on how the Council might further or alternatively support our town centres and retail businesses

This should be done ASAP

you could offer free rent for a trial time to see if business could get established also I have been shocked at the high rates you charge at the craft centre/model house Llantrisant. please consider reducing rate, i as a tax payer would rather see these unit & others like in in use rather than empty & deteriorating !!!! it will aid regeneration of our towns.

Reduce car parking fees or introduce free parking after 10am - if even for only 3 or 4 hours

See below.

In what way discretionary ? Businesses should pay towards upkeep of the local community.

Changes to planning regulations are needed to stop national chains 'hoovering-up' small businesses. I am lucky enough to live in Treorchy (which is doing well) but if ever a weatherspoons, Tesco or Starbucks move in we'll end up like Tonypany (and no-one wants that).

Consider zero rate for new businesses for 2-3years.

Through more careful planning decisions, trying to ensure there is a more varied and versatile type of shop/business..

Organise and communicate communal opening hours in return for the discounts. Shops opening hours change daily and reduce trade. On a Saturday many shops close early, others are open until two and others are open until four or five. Would just like predictability.

Charge owners of empty retail / commercial land and properties empty building fees 100% same as the proposed residential charges.

Properties used for domestic and non domestic purposes should be exempt from business rates to encourage start ups.

Any help to businesses in general is great. More support is needed for martial art businesses, we give such great value to health and fitness members of the public and its not being heard enough.

local small independent businesses should have 100% relief. There is already tremendous pressure on independent shops on the high street and the business rates bill could make these businesses close and then that has a detrimental effect on our high street. Shops such as cross-nation travel

agents like Tui/Greggs/Banks etc should pay rates as they make huge profits nationwide unlike small shops who only trade in the community. They are ones who need help not businesse of their profit. Make the criteria profit based not size of property

Additional comments:

Whilst in principle I agree with assistance for small business, I do wonder if the money is needed more elsewhere e.g. social care. I admit that our town centres are dying off, but I'm not certain that financial assistance for business rates for small business is what will save it. Town centres are dying because people don't use them, we're all guilty of flooding to retail parks or shopping online, before heading to the town centre to shop. This is what kills off small businesses, so I'm not entirely certain financial relief of £300 will make any difference. To be clear, this is the fault of us as consumers, not the local authority.

I am generally supportive of the proposals but I think petrol stations and take-aways should be excluded; both are bad for the environment and take-aways can contribute to the obesity epididemic.

No rates for first twelve months of a new business.

Fees needed for empty properties to pay for the relief for properties in use. The empty and damaged properties need to be charged 100% in addition to the normal council/business rate to be in line with new proposed changes for residential charges.

We run a Local business on aberaman ind. est. Would that apply to us? All small business could do with more support.

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