



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

A virtual meeting of the CABINET will be held on
Thursday, 28th January, 2021 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, 26 January 2021 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 meeting held on the 18th December 2020.

(Pages 5 - 12)

3. CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET STEERING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

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 16th November 2020, to consider reports on Nature's Assets, Strategic and Local Development Plans and Energy Generation.

(Pages 13 - 58)

4. WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN ANNUAL UPDATE 2020

To receive the report of the Director, Education & Inclusion Services, which provides the Cabinet with an update on the actions outlined in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's (RCTCBC's) Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) for the period between 2017 and 2020 as approved by the Welsh Government (WG) on the 15th of March 2018. The previous 2019 to 2020 annual update was due to be the last annual update for this WESP, however, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this WESP has been extended to cover the period between 2020 to 2021.

(Pages 59 - 100)

5. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME - PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE EDUCATION PROVISION FOR YSGOL GYNRADD GYMRAEG LLYN-Y-FORWYN

To receive the report of the Director, Education and Inclusion Services, which seeks Members approval to begin the relevant and required statutory consultation for the proposal to carry out a regulated alteration to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llyn-y-Forwyn ("YGG Llyn-y-Forwyn"), by way of transferring the school to a new building on a new site.

(Pages 101 - 142)

6. THE COUNCIL'S 2021/2022 REVENUE BUDGET

To receive the report of the Director, Finance and Digital Services, which provides the Cabinet with information in respect of the 2021/2022 local government settlement and the outcomes of the budget consultation phase 1 exercise, to assist with its deliberations in formulating the revenue budget strategy for the financial year 2021/22, which it will recommend to Council, for approval.

(Pages 143 - 220)

REPORT FOR INFORMATION

7. LEADER'S SCHEME OF DELEGATION - 3A

To receive the updated [Leader's Scheme of Delegation](#) following recent changes to the Senior Leadership Team.

8. URGENT ITEMS

To consider any urgent business as the Chairman feels appropriate.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Richard S. Henry". The signature is written in black ink on a white 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
Councillor G Hopkins

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



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Cabinet held on Friday, 18 December 2020 at 1.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors - Cabinet Members in attendance:-

Councillor A Morgan (Chair)

Councillor M Webber	Councillor R Bevan
Councillor A Crimmings	Councillor M Norris
Councillor J Rosser	Councillor R Lewis
Councillor C Leyshon	Councillor G Hopkins

Officers in attendance

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr N Wheeler, Group Director – Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services
Mr P Mee, Director, Public Health, Protection & Community Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
Mr R Waters, Service Director, Frontline Services

Others in attendance

Councillor M Adams
Councillor J Brencher
Councillor H Fychan
Councillor E Griffiths
Councillor M Weaver

39 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

40 MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17th November 2020 as an accurate record.

41 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Service Director, Democratic Services & Communication provided Cabinet Members with a draft work programme for the 2020-2021 Municipal Year, which listed matters requiring consideration by Cabinet.

The Service Director spoke of the current circumstances, commenting that there

was a greater need for flexibility of the programme.

Members were referred to Appendix 1 of the report and were advised that the programme is a live document to allow for any additional / deletion of reports throughout the year.

The Deputy Leader commented that utilising the programme assists with openness and transparency of the decision-making process within the Council and gives greater opportunity for Pre-Scrutiny.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Work Programme for the 2020-2021 Municipal Year (with appropriate amendment where necessary) and to receive a further update on a 3 monthly basis.

42 A4119 ELY VALLEY ROAD DUALLING - LLANTRISANT BUSINESS PARK TO COED ELY ROUNDABOUTS

The Service Director Frontline Services provided Cabinet with an update on the current progress related to the development and delivery of the major transportation project: A4119 Ely Valley Road Dualling, Llantrisant Business Park to Coed Ely Roundabouts.

Members were informed that Preliminary design of the project had been completed and was now at detailed design stage which was due to be complete in Spring 2021. The Service Director advised that as part of the continual value engineering of the project, the roundabout servicing the South Wales Fire Service Headquarters had been retained as the accommodation work required for a new entrance required extensive engineering works which would have resulted in increasing the cost of the project by a further £2m.

Details of an agreed partnership approach with Welsh Government to provide an Active Travel compliant foot/cycle bridge instead of an underpass at the Coed Ely roundabout were also advised upon. Members learnt that the bridge would serve the development site as well as providing an Active Travel route. Members were advised that Welsh Government were working with the Council to address the additional costs.

The Cabinet Member for Enterprise Development and Housing welcomed the update report and commented upon the many benefits people from the County Borough would experience through the project and welcomed the additions outlined by the Service Director.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services commented on the benefits the scheme would have for the Rhondda Valley and queried whether the retained roundabout at the Fire Headquarters would link into a dual carriage way as he spoke of the bottleneck situation currently experienced. The Service Director confirmed that the intention was to have a dual carriage way layout to prevent any future congestion.

The Leader spoke positively of the project and again reiterated the benefits the project would have for lots of residents and commuters in and out of the County Borough adding that the project would be complimented by future work with the Coed Ely development site.

Following discussions it was **RESOLVED**:

- (i) To note the progress made and endorse the next steps in the programme for the project.
- (ii) To give delegated authority to the Group Director Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services to submit a planning application on behalf of the Council for the proposed Active Travel bridge at Coed Ely roundabout.

43 WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION: DRAFT REGULATIONS TO ESTABLISH CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEES

The Director of Legal Services referred Members to the Joint report before them advising that through the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill, provisions had been included to create via regulations, a vehicle for consistent regional collaboration between principal councils through the use of Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs). Members were advised that Welsh Government recognise that collaboration is not new to local government, with principal councils collaborating effectively in a range of areas for a long time. The Director referenced the significant role Rhondda Cynon Taf Council had played in establishing collaborations across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg footprint and wider South Wales region.

Members were advised that the aim through CJCs was to ensure there were consistent, resilient and accountable regional arrangements for the delivery of three important functions (i) strategic land use planning (ii) strategic transport planning and (iii) economic development. It was added that Welsh Government believe that by establishing CJC's through regulations it would provide more coherence and less complexity in the approach to regional governance arrangements in exercising the three functions proposed.

The Director provided Members with a brief overview of the key functions of a CJC including membership, establishment, voting rights, co-opted Members, staffing and resources and scrutiny. Members were advised that initial start up funding would be provided for and that the inaugural meeting of the CJC would need to be undertaken by September 2021.

Before concluding the Director advised that the Draft Regulations shaping CJCs was currently out for Consultation and informed Members that at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 9th December 2020, Members of the Committee discussed the draft regulations and feedback from that meeting would form part of the overall response to the consultation.

At this juncture in the meeting the Leader called upon County Borough Councillor M Adams, as Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee who proceeded to provide the Cabinet with an overview of Scrutiny's comments in respect of the draft regulations.

The Deputy Leader thanked the Scrutiny Committee for their feedback

and echoed some of the concerns raised. The Deputy Leader commented on the maximum discretion needed in regional Local Authorities when working within CJsCs in respect of governance arrangements and functionality. The Member also reiterated concerns in respect of co-opted members and the implications this would have on democracy; the ambitious timescales set out with the September 2021 start date and the lack of scrutiny arrangements outlined within the draft regulations which she added was a must for any accountability.

The Leader commented that he was happy in principle with the concept of CJsCs and spoke of some potential concerns with mandating of functions exercised by CJsCs. He added that for CJsCs to be successful they needed to be shaped and driven forward by Local Government.

The Cabinet Member for Enterprise Development and Housing agreed that Elected Members needed to drive the agenda forward in respect of CJsCs and also raised concerns in respect of the proposed elected and non elected membership. The Cabinet Member saw the benefits that co-opted members would bring in respect of expertise but felt that this would be better served on a sub committee of a CJC, rather than reducing democratic accountability on the CJC itself.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services commented positively on the sharing of best practices and the further opportunity to minimise duplication adding that CJsCs provided further scope for financial savings for Authorities. The Cabinet Member welcomed the financial support to be provided in respect of initial start up costs which would take away the burden from Local Authorities.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Community Services and the Welsh Language queried how the CJsCs would relate to other established joint working arrangements referencing the Joint Education Service and Regional Partnership Board. The Director of Legal Services advised that such arrangements would continue as is although there could be potential future scope for these to be included within the CJC arrangements. The Leader commented that the WLGA's view in respect of this was that the Local education footprint was already delivering through its own arrangements and should therefore not be touched and that CJsCs should take forward smaller areas first.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Inclusion concluded the discussions by also paying tribute to the high standard of work delivered by the existing collaborative arrangements and commented on the importance for Local Authorities to shape the needs for delivery in order to maximise the outcomes achieved.

Following detailed discussions it was **RESOLVED**:

- I. To note the [Welsh Government \(WG\) Consultation document](#), attached at Appendix 2 to the report, which relates to draft

regulations that would establish the South East Wales CJC and then exercise the following functions across the region; (1) economic well-being, (2) strategic development planning, and (3) developing transport policies;

- II. To give delegated authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to complete the final written response to the WG consultation based on Members' feedback at the meeting and feedback received from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 9th December 2020 and submit that response to WG prior to the consultation closing.

44 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO STORM DENNIS

The Chief Executive provided Members with a detailed overview of the Council's response to Storm Dennis, one of four major storms to hit Wales at the start of 2020 which resulted in 1,070 households being flooded within RCT. Within his overview, the Chief Executive further provided a series of recommendations for Cabinet's consideration that would enhance the Council's short term and long term response to extreme weather events and which limit the impact of flooding on those communities most at risk.

The Chief Executive commented upon the extreme weather event of Storm Dennis that happened after a series of other events. He also referenced the topography of the County Borough which was also a factor to the events that unfolded and the devastating impact the storm had on local communities across the County Borough. The Chief Executive spoke of households and businesses that were flooded, the significant landslide at Tylorstown and the storm damage caused to highways infrastructure assets, drainage systems, and Council buildings such as the National Lido for Wales.

Members were provided with an overview of the work undertaken by the Council in preparation for the Storm, the work undertaken during and the immediate aftermath.

The Leader thanked the Chief Executive for his detailed report and also thanked Members for their submissions contained with Appendix 3 of the report, advising that two late submissions had also been received since publication of the report with these being circulated to Cabinet Members for information. The Leader also thanked the work and comments provided by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to date and the emerging themes identified.

The Leader commented on the recommendations contained within the report which would require significant funding and also spoke of the cost of damages to date exceeding £80million. Members were advised of the level of investment and number of projects already taken forward by the Council, the mapping exercises already underway and individual surveys needing to be taken forward to ensure things are done correctly and that infrastructures, such as culverts are still fit for purpose. The Leader advised of discussions taken forward with National Resources Wales and the preventive measures that need to be strengthened commenting on an 'Emergency control room' which would monitor flood devices and be equipped with an independent telephone line and the added intelligence this would provide if such a situation arose again. The Leader commented on the need to make properties more resilient and added

that the robustness of the Council systems in place had further improved following the event and he thanked all the staff and the communities that had contributed to the efforts, before, during and after Storm Dennis. The Leader concluded his remarks by requesting that a further report on the Council's position in respect of Storm Dennis be provided to Cabinet or Council in the New Year.

The Deputy Leader spoke of the exceptional response witnessed before, during and after the event and advised that due to the excellent flood alleviation scheme already in place within her ward the impact on residents was minimised although added that flooding could not be mitigated against entirely, as unfortunately a small number of residents still did experience flooding within their properties. She further commented on the community resilience and working together noting the importance of the 'voices of the communities' ensuring good communication links with the residents of the County Borough and Elected Members. In respect of Elected Members, reference was made to the importance of the Members portal once fully developed and the opportunity to feed into the Members induction training following the 2022 elections. The Deputy Leader spoke of the invaluable work of scrutiny which had fed into the report before the Cabinet and the importance of the ongoing work in this area by scrutiny. The Deputy Leader conclude her comments by adding that although the Council could never eliminate flooding or control nature the Council would continue to do all that was possible to minimise the risk.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services welcomed the report before them, adding that the report, combined with close working with NRW and the outcomes of the S19 report would provide the Council with sufficient information to act upon. He continued by commenting on the need to mitigate against any future issues that could potentially arise from climate change. The Member spoke positively of the investments and projects already being delivered upon by the Council and the lobbying taken forward to the Westminster government for further flood prevention schemes funding.

The Cabinet Member for Enterprise Development and Housing commented upon the landslide that occurred in Tylorstown, on an area much widely used by the public. The Member thanked the officers for the responsive action taken and the ongoing work to ensure the area is safe. The Cabinet Member commented on the regular monitoring undertaken of all existing coal tips and the importance of funding needed from central government to remove coal tips and alleviate people's concerns of any future disasters.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure & Heritage paid tribute to the staff that worked effortlessly during the events of storm Dennis and the community resilience witnessed, with the offers of help from all. The Cabinet Member spoke of the importance of open communication lines and the reference within the report to the emergency control room which she felt would enhance communication, and utilising the communications teams to provide real time information she felt would be invaluable.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Services & the Welsh Language spoke of the importance of robust systems in place for warning the public and commented on the shortcoming identified within the report. The Cabinet Member highlighted the importance for all agencies to work together, to provide sufficient warnings where water rises quickly. The Leader provide Members with details of monitoring within the new control room, the alarm systems in place for blocked

culverts and the cctv operations to be taken forward of monitoring rivers at key areas so that if NRW's alert system was to fail the Council could utilise the provisions it has in place to raise awareness.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services commented on the ongoing discussions between the Council and NRW to try to prevent such events occurring again and spoke of the need for other agencies to be involved in such discussions commenting upon the flooding within her own ward and the role played by Dwy'r Cymru, Newtork Rail and Transport for Wales. The Cabinet Member paid tribute to the volunteers that assisted in Trehafod Community Centre ensuring the wellbeing of the village.

The Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, Well-being & Cultural Services also thanked the staff and local communities for coming together in peoples time of need and providing a strengthened community spirit during difficult times. The Member welcomed the report and the work solutions provided within and spoke of the importance of not only looking at flood defence infrastructures but also as part of the flood strategy going forward the climate change agenda, commenting on water segregation, tree planting, water catchment reviews and peat bogs.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Inclusion Services commented on the unprecedented nature of the weather events that occurred at the start of the year and welcomed the recommendations identified within the report which aligned with the comments provided by scrutiny, adding that she felt this was a fair and balanced reflection of the Council's response to the storm.

At this juncture in the meeting, the Leader called upon County Borough Councillor M Adams in his role as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee who provided Cabinet with an overview of the work of scrutiny.

With the permission of the Leader, County Borough Councillor J Brencher also addressed the Cabinet.

The deputy Leader took the opportunity to query whether any funding was to be provided by NRW for the flood measures needed, commenting in particular on the flooding that occurred in lower Treforest. The Leader advised that lots of conversations were still taking place with NRW and spoke of the lines of responsibility between the Council and NRW.

The Leader summed up the discussions of the Cabinet, commenting that the costings associated with the proposed recommendations would be factored into the budget strategy. He spoke of the importance of a further report being provided to Cabinet or Council in the New Year once the capital programme had been agreed. He concluded by further commenting on the role of scrutiny and the further work that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could undertake in respect of scrutinising the implementation of the recommendations outlined within the report.

Following detailed discussions it was **RESOLVED**:

- I. To note the action taken by the Council in respect of Storm Dennis:
 - a) Before the Storm;
 - b) During the Storm;
 - c) Immediately after the Storm;

- d) In the days and weeks following the Storm;
 - e) The longer-term response to repairing and replacing damaged infrastructure and preventing future flooding events.
-
- II. To note the feedback from the work to date of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in respect of its review of the events of Storm Dennis and the multi-agency response as set out in Appendix C of this report.
 - III. To note and approve the recommendations for improvement set out in [Section 11](#) of this report.
 - IV. That progress against the recommendations for improvement are included in the Financial and Performance Management Reports, presented to Cabinet each quarter and to the relevant Scrutiny Committee.
 - V. That a further report which sets out the findings of the Section 19 Investigation Reports of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 currently being undertaken are presented to a future Cabinet in the New Year and that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee scrutinise the section 19 report once published and scrutinise the ongoing work that the Council is undertaking in respect of its recommendations contained within this report.

This meeting closed at 2.19 pm

**Cllr A Morgan
Chairman.**

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

28TH JANUARY 2021

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 16th November 2020, to consider reports on Nature's Assets, the Strategic and Local Development Plans and Energy Generation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the content of the three reports considered by the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group on the 16th November 2020, which are attached to the report
- 2.2 Note the feedback and discussion of the Steering Group and;
- 2.3 Agree the recommendation of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group in respect of the Nature's Assets report:
- I. That the Director, Corporate Estates and the Council's Ecologist undertake a review of the publicly owned land, to identify those sites which are most suitable for peatbog restoration and the cost implications; with a report presented back to the Steering Group for its consideration.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

4. THE CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET STEERING GROUP

- 4.1 The Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group met on the 16th November 2020, where the following reports were considered:

4.2 NATURE'S ASSETS (APPENDIX 1)

The unique landscape and wildlife assets of Rhondda Cynon Taf means that the approach we adopt to the Climate and Nature emergencies should reflect these special circumstances. The Rhondda Cynon Taf landscape is rich in priority 'natural' habitats, undisturbed soils and peat bogs, all of which are important 'carbon stores'⁴. Members noted that the RCT population has one of the lowest ecological footprints in Wales (see appendix 1). The RCT area is also unusual in that a large area of the County Borough is in public ownership, including the Welsh Government forest estate as well as many Council owned sites, and large areas of green space associated with new developments. Therefore, in Rhondda Cynon Taf we have opportunities for natural solutions that are not available in other places.

Members acknowledged how fortunate RCT is to have a wealth of 'natural' carbon solutions due to its unique landscape, which is rich in undisturbed soils and peatbogs.

The Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group considered the report of the Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services, which sought the Steering Group's feedback on issues relating to Nature's Assets and the climate and biodiversity emergencies. Members were provided with the proposed priorities for carbon storage, based on basic principles of the carbon cycle.

Members praised the officer for the informative report and acknowledged the plethora of biodiversity within RCT.

One Member was particularly interested in the natural regeneration of the woodland. The Member raised concerns in relation to the damage caused to tree saplings by mountain fires and questioned if there were mitigations in place to prevent it. The officer advised the Member of the 'Healthy Hillside Project' approach, which ensures conservation management/conservation grazing in areas which are not subject to wildfire problems, in order to maintain fern whilst promoting wildflowers, wildlife and woodland regeneration.

Members agreed that education and support of the community was a priority. The Chair emphasised the importance of education and spoke of the high profile campaigns involving the fire service and police service, which sought to educate young people on the importance of the hillsides and its wildlife.

Members noted that the most effective way to increase carbon sequestration in RCT would be to restore the many degraded peatbog and associated heathland and marshy grassland habitats that occur on the relatively flat hilltops above the valleys. Following a lengthy discussion, Members felt it would be beneficial for a review to be undertaken by the Director, Corporate Estates and the Council's Ecologist to identify those sites which are most suitable for peatbog restoration on land owned by the Local Authority and NRW. The review would consist of identifying the priority areas and the cost implications, in order to

present a report back to the Steering Group of the findings for its consideration. The Chief Executive emphasised the importance of planning ahead, should Cabinet agree to set money aside within the Capital programme.

4.3 STRATEGIC AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS - THEIR POLICIES AND COMMITMENTS TO ENSURING HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION AND BUSINESS INFRASTRUCTURE MINIMISES THE CARBON FOOTPRINT (APPENDIX 2)

Welsh Government have been committed to cutting emissions and transitioning to a low carbon economy for a number of years and in March 2019, published *Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales*. The publication seeks to maximise wider benefits for Wales, ensuring a fairer, healthier and more equal society. The plan *pulls together 76 existing pieces of policy from across the Welsh Government, UK Government and the EU where decarbonisation is integrated either as a direct outcome or a wider benefit*. Some are new policy, such as the Renewable Energy Targets and improved policy in *Planning Policy Wales (Ed. 10)*, where decarbonisation is a central pillar.

The Steering Group considered the report of the Director, Prosperity and Development, which set out what the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) and the Revised Local Development Plan (LDP) are required to address with regards to policies and commitments to minimise our Carbon Footprint; and the opportunities that would present themselves during the preparation and formulation of these plans, (particularly from an LDP perspective), to expand upon these standard requirements from an RCT perspective.

The Steering Group noted that the LDP would act as the land use expression of the Council's aspirations, including climate change and carbon reduction, which ensures that key elements are allocated. It was noted that the priority Peatbogs restoration areas identified could be allocated within the revised LDP, following the recommendation made by Members in respect of the report on Nature's Assets.

Members noted that the LDP could act as a persuasive document for developers to consider eco-friendly options moving forward. It was also noted that the City Region had agreed funding for electrical vehicle charging points for taxi and transportation services in the first instance; and that officers were undertaking an exercise to look at Council car parks to consider any opportunities for charging points.

4.4 ENERGY GENERATION AND RELATED ISSUES (APPENDIX 3)

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has a long-established programme of investing in Energy Generation measures and amidst other initiatives, this has included the installation of renewable Energy technology with over 100 Solar panel arrays being installed across both Schools and Corporate Buildings totalling 1.58 MW.

The officers outlined the Council's current energy strategies, the potential expansion of renewable energy ambitions and current renewable energy projects, including the following initiatives:

- The Taffs Well Thermal Spring Project – the project is currently underway and when completed will make use of renewable geothermal/underground energy using water from the River Taff.
- Support was previously provided for the development of a community micro-hydro scheme at Clydach.

Furthermore, the Steering Group noted that the Corporate Estates Energy team had been investigating the potential of using RCT-owned land for the development of major renewable Energy projects for both Wind and Solar generation, with the assistance of the Welsh Government Energy Service.

The Steering Group noted that a range of energy options had been explored, such as wind, solar and hydro energy. It was pleasing to note the various ambitious and positive energy generation initiatives such as the potential wind farm installations, the development of Taffs Well Thermal Spring, which would produce energy for the local school and hub and the development of an Eco Park on undeveloped land at Bryn Pica.

Members did questioned how the estimated Carbon Benefit of 2,323 Carbon Tonnes per annum had been calculated. Officers confirmed that the figure had been determined by a standard calculation process in conjunction with the Welsh Government Energy Service. The calculation had been comprised by focussing on the carbon savings in use for the generated energy only, based on investment and not the embedded carbon in delivering the project up to that point. The Director recognised that the embedded carbon would need to be considered if the Council were to claim that the project would be Net Zero in its own right.

The Steering Group welcomed the detailed update and looked forward to hearing of the progress at a future meeting.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 5.1 In respect of the Nature's Asset report, relevance is place on the Environment (Wales) Act 2016t. Part One covers the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and includes the Biodiversity Duty (S6). This part also sets the context for policy and action for the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales. Part Two considers climate change and informs Welsh Government policy in this regard.
- 5.2 The proposals within the Local Development Plan report, would be considered through the preparation process of the statutory revision of the LDP.

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 There are no Consultation implications aligned to the report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 As the Nature's Assets report covers a number of new policy areas for the Council, there may be financial implications arising from future implementation. Some projects described, such as the 'Healthy Hillside' and 'Lost Peatland' projects have already obtained grant funding. There are likely to be some short-term Welsh government capital grant opportunities for 2020/21, in particular relating to Green Infrastructure. Where no funding is currently available, the Cabinet may require additional information before considering whether and how these issues should be addressed.

8.2 It is considered that any financial implications from Strategic Local Development Plan report will be associated with the formulation of the required evidence base for the preparation of the Revised LDP.

8.3 In respect of the Energy Generation update, all existing 'live' projects are funded through relevant cost centres and an existing enabling budget so there are no further financial implications aligned to the report.

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

9.1 The discussion of Natures' Assets contributes to the Council's priority to 'build a sustainable County Borough' as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2016-2020. It will contribute to the discussions about the next Corporate Plan for the period 2020 to 2024, which is likely to contain further consideration of the Climate and Biodiversity Emergencies.

9.2 Consideration of Natures Assets must reflect the five ways of working in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. In particular, this must be a long-term consideration, focused on preventative and precautionary action. It will contribute specifically to the Resilience and Global Responsibility goals of the Act, but in the longer term it could have implications for all the goals.

9.3 Preparation of the revised LDP will embrace the principles of the Corporate Plan, along with the wellbeing goals and five ways of working as identified within the WCFG Act. The revised LDP will also be guided by the aims and objectives set forth in the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan 2018-2023 entitled Our Cwm Taf. The revised plan will also be influenced by the cultural, economic, environmental and social well-being goals and objectives within Our Cwm Taf, where they relate to land-use planning.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 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 16th November 2020, the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group met to consider reports on Nature's Assets, the Strategic and Local Development Plans and Energy Generation.
- 10.3 The Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group recommends Cabinet consideration consider supporting the content of the above reports.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

28TH JANUARY 2021

**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)**

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET STEERING GROUP

16TH NOVEMBER 2020

NATURE'S ASSETS

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

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to consult the Steering Group on issues relating to Nature's Assets and the climate and biodiversity emergencies.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Steering Group:

- 2.1 Comment on the issues raised in this report, and
- 2.2 That the feedback and comments of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group are reported to Cabinet for their consideration.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To enable the committee to consider the opportunities to maximise carbon storage through the natural assets in Rhondda Cynon Taf and advise the Cabinet accordingly. The issues raised could have implications for future Council policy, priorities and expenditure.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The landscape and wildlife of the South Wales Valleys are unique in Southern Britain, boasting a huge diversity of habitats and species occurring in close proximity and accessible to a large urban population. The biodiversity rich landscapes of Rhondda Cynon Taf lie at the centre of these riches, greatly valued by local people and a fundamental part of our shared sense of culture, place and community^{1, 2}.

4.2 'Action for Nature' is the Plan to protect and enhance the wildlife and biodiversity of Rhondda Cynon Taf. It was initially developed in the late 1990's, by a partnership of local people and organisations who had an interest, passion and knowledge of local wildlife. The first plan was published in 2000 and it was reviewed by the Partnership in 2009. The Plan is being reviewed again in the light of new legislation and changing circumstances. The Partnership continues to be passionate and has continued to evolve, regularly welcoming new participants. Individuals, community groups, specialist wildlife organisations (like Butterfly Conservation), local specialist groups (e.g. Glamorgan Fungi Group, The Coal Spoil Initiative), Natural Resources Wales and the Wildlife Trust for South and West Wales are well represented.

4.3 Keep Wales Tidy has provided a long-term link with local community groups, many of whom take an active part in the partnership and in practical projects. Recent grant funding from Welsh Government to the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) has provided a 1.5 day a week post for the Partnership in RCT until March 2023. The grant aims to extend the Partnership to include other public bodies like the health sector, business and the wider voluntary sector. Working with Interlink³, the community voluntary council for RCT, will be an important part of this project.

4.4 **A Rhondda Cynon Taf Strategy for Nature's Assets**

4.4.1 The unique landscape and wildlife assets of Rhondda Cynon Taf means that the approach we adopt to the Climate and Nature emergencies should reflect these special circumstances. The Rhondda Cynon Taf landscape is rich in priority 'natural' habitats, undisturbed soils and peat bogs, all of which are important 'carbon stores'⁴. We are lucky to have such a wealth of 'natural' carbon solutions. Across much of the British landscape, these were lost to the intensive land management practices of the recent past. In addition, the RCT population has one of the lowest ecological footprints in Wales (see appendix 1). The RCT area is also unusual in that a large area of the County Borough is in public ownership, including the Welsh Government forest estate as well as many Council owned sites, and large areas of green space associated with new developments. Therefore, in Rhondda Cynon Taf we have opportunities for natural solutions that are not available in other places.

4.4.2 Measuring carbon storage and the way carbon and methane (a more powerful but shorter-lived greenhouse gas) move through the environment is extremely complex, and is the subject of much on-going research and investigation. However, the proposed priorities for carbon storage, based on basic principles of the carbon cycle (see appendix 2) provide an established framework for action.

- Protect existing carbon stores through conservation of our wealth of semi-natural habitats and undisturbed soils;
- Restore degraded peatbog and associated habitats;
- Promote an expansion of urban green infrastructure;

- Encourage the expansion of native woodland by natural regeneration;
- Integrate carbon storage solution with conservation and recognition of our existing biodiversity, landscapes and cultural assets.

4.5 The following sections explore how these priorities can be built into the Council's work.

4.6 **Existing carbon stores**

4.6.1 More than 70% of Rhondda Cynon Taf is countryside and this is already storing a large amount of carbon. Undisturbed soil, especially soils with a high organic matter content with well-established natural or semi-natural vegetation cover (which includes not just woodland, but old grasslands, heaths, wetlands, bogs and the valleyside ffridd) provides a stable carbon store for the long term. These complex habitat mosaics also hold a huge part of the richness of RCT's native biodiversity. We have huge areas of priority habitat and most of our agricultural land is permanent pasture. Losses of this carbon will occur when ground is ploughed (e.g. for crops or to reseed grass) or if the ground is built over for houses, roads, commercial development etc. Protecting those soils from disturbance is a key action; even tree planting can release stored soil carbon.

4.6.2. How land is managed can also affect stored carbon. Removing soil or vegetation (including timber), wild fire, soil compaction and soil erosion all reduce stored carbon. Re-wetting peaty soils (which contain a lot of carbon locked up in organic material), conserving natural priority habitats, allowing (where appropriate) natural regeneration and natural processes all promote carbon sequestration.

4.6.3 The Local Development Plan plays a significant role in directing development to appropriate sites minimising the impact on the wider countryside. The draft National Development Framework published by Welsh Government for consultation in 2019 aims to focus new development in existing settlements. Welsh Government is also promoting the energy hierarchy that prioritises demand reduction, energy conservation and renewable energy sources over fossil fuel extraction (coal and gas).

4.7 **Peatbog restoration**

4.7.1 The most effective way to increase carbon sequestration in RCT would be to restore the many degraded peatbog and associated heathland and marshy grassland habitats that occur on the relatively flat hilltops above the valleys. Where anaerobic (oxygen free) wet conditions can be restored, the actively accumulating peatbogs and waterlogged wetlands that develop are very effective as carbon stores. The sphagnum mosses that form the peat in peatbogs grows slowly, but the carbon and biomass they accumulate in their lives is stored when they die and form peat, and is kept from release back to the atmosphere. Ancient peat bogs still safely store carbon originally captured from the atmosphere thousands of years ago. Conversely, peatbogs that are

degrading may be releasing carbon into the atmosphere contributing to global warming.

4.7.2 The Pen-y-Cymoedd windfarm will provide a 25-year landscape scale demonstration project of how to successfully restore a very large area of peatbog and associated habitats which lies between and around the turbines. £3m from the developers will contribute towards removal of conifer trees, blocking ditches, habitat management and monitoring the impact as part of the planning consent. The Heritage Fund has recently announced funding for the Lost Peatlands project to extend the scope and involve local communities in the restoration. Other benefits from the peatbog restoration include increased water storage in the uplands, potentially reducing flood risk in urban areas downstream and reducing wild fire risk in dry summers. In addition, peatbogs are an internationally rare habitat for which the UK and Wales have a global duty to protect. As our own version of the rain forests, restoring our peat bogs will benefit a unique range of mosses, plants and animals that depend upon them. There are at least 6 other long-term peat bog restoration schemes in RCT linked to green energy planning permissions. Something in excess of 700 hectares of peat bog restoration is achievable in this way. In addition, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are also undertaking two peatbog restoration projects on the forest estate in Rhondda Cynon Taf at Mynydd Ton and Castell Nos. There is huge potential to undertake more of this work and an urgency to commence this in areas where the current forestry is leading to significant degradation of the remnant peatlands⁴.

4.8 Urban Green Infrastructure

4.8.1 Inevitably, carbon storage opportunities are more restricted in urban areas but net gains are more likely to be achieved. Urban greening, often called 'Green Infrastructure' can offer multiple benefits to residents (aesthetics, air quality, play space, reduced flooding, active travel etc.) as well as storing carbon. Managing urban green infrastructure to maintain stored carbon and the other benefits will also be important and some of the challenges this poses are considered in s4.13 below.

4.8.2 Rhondda Cynon Taf has some of the highest urban tree canopy cover in Wales (RCT average 18.5% in 2013, Wales 16.3%) but surveys by NRW show that we are losing larger trees from the Victorian and Edwardian era⁵. Some built up areas have lower levels of tree cover (e.g. Brynna/ Llanharan is below 10%) and these should be the priority for expanding cover. In addition, many of our Parks and Cemeteries have aging tree populations, and developing a new urban tree-scape for the twenty-first century will provide multiple benefits. Green Infrastructure to store carbon may not be restricted to trees. Green roofs and walls, gardens, grass playing fields and pitches all contribute. The Wildflower Grassland Management Policy is a recent example of the Council's work in this area where reduced grass cutting and biodiversity enhancement for wildflowers and insects provides additional environmental and social benefits. The biggest net gains for carbon sequestration will be made where soil and growing plants can replace hard surfaces for the long term.

4.8.3 Green/ Blue Infrastructure has a role in reducing flood risk in towns. Rain gardens, porous surfaces and sustainable drainage systems all contribute. This is the key driver behind the introduction of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water management Act 2010 which requires all new construction work over 100m² to require SuDs approval prior to the commencement on site with a view of managing the local flood risk whilst ensuring the naturalisation in the urban and rural environments. The requirement also addresses the enhancement of water quality, amenity, biodiversity and future maintenance of green/ blue infrastructure to ensure future generations can benefit from the development. The website has information related to RCT's Sustainable Drainage Approving Body (SAB).⁶ A number of schemes for increasing tree cover in Parks and Cemeteries and for surface water management have been recently submitted for grant funding. Grant funding from schemes such as 'Local Places for Nature' and 'Greening Public Estates' provides opportunities to use our local parks and cemeteries as a first step towards urban tree planting thus enabling local communities to benefit directly by improving the urban landscape on their doorstep.

4.8.4 Again, the new LDP will provide opportunities to promote Green Infrastructure, as this is a new feature of Welsh Government planning guidance (PPW10) published in 2018.

4.9 **Expansion of native woodland by natural regeneration**

4.9.1 Both the UK and Welsh government have priorities for increasing tree cover to sequester more carbon. Finding ways to meet these targets without damaging our existing mosaics of rich biodiversity (and carbon storing) habitats will be challenging if we only consider tree planting as a solution. Rhondda Cynon Taff already has a much higher level of tree cover (about 33%) than other parts of Wales or the UK. Because of the extent and diversity of semi-natural habitat in Rhondda Cynon Taf, planting trees in the countryside for carbon sequestration may not be appropriate in many circumstances. In addition, woodland cover has naturally expanded significantly over the past fifty or more years and is likely to continue to expand due to the processes of natural regeneration. In RCT low intensity land management and our wonderful warm, wet climate provide ideal conditions for native trees to naturally seed and grow.

4.9.2 Natural regeneration results in 'the right tree in the right place' more so than planting. The trees that develop are from the local seedbank and are better adapted to local conditions. Regeneration avoids introducing tree diseases, requires no plastic tubes or stakes and no fertiliser, herbicides, pesticides, watering or strimming and it is free! As woodland cover develops, natural regeneration create an important succession of wildlife rich habitats from tall grass through to scrub and then woodland. Although initially a little slower, natural regeneration quickly catches up and can over-take growth of planted trees. Ultimately, natural regeneration realises woodland cover every bit as quickly as that achieved by tree planting.^{7, 8, 9, 10, 11}

- 4.9.3 Some areas of Council owned land are let for commercial grazing, but much of it is in conservation management, with minimal intervention to natural processes. Appropriate management of Council estate is however important if we wish to preserve and conserve the whole range of our flora and fauna. Therefore, conservation grazing and biodiversity grass management are key biodiversity actions. However, the low intensity management of conservation grazing often encourages tree growth around the edges of sites, and conservation grass cutting areas often include areas, which regenerate to tree cover. Indeed, the Healthy Hillside project is a good example of this. Initial pilots in Rhondda Cynon Taf are now being extended with funding from Welsh Government grant. Working in collaboration with Natural Resources Wales, the Fire Service, the Wildlife Trust and many others, the project aims to bring sites at risk of wildfire into management, typically using conservation grazing. Once the risk of fire is removed, woodland cover will significantly increase as part of the resulting patchwork of managed habitats.
- 4.9.4 Managing coal spoil tips to maintain public safety and biodiversity value, in particular for pollinators is another challenge. Bare ground and open flower-rich habitats are required for many of the insects (including a wealth of pollinators) that make these habitats so special, as well as for their unique lichen and fungi communities. Colliery spoil sites (including many of the 1970s and 80s reclaimed sites) are proving to be biodiversity hot spots with habitat and species assemblages that are unique to South Wales. Planting trees on colliery spoil may seem to offer opportunities to increase tree cover, but in doing so habitats of extremely high biodiversity and immense cultural value may be lost. In addition, until tips have aged sufficiently to develop deep enough soils, tree planting will require intensive ground preparation and importation of growing material; both of which will involve an associated carbon footprint, biodiversity loss and potential source of erosion. Tips do eventually start to naturally scrub over and develop woodland, but only when they have equally naturally developed soils capable of doing so. Managing scrub to retain some open ground is now becoming an important management consideration on some of our oldest and rarest remaining Victorian and Edwardian Tips¹².
- 4.9.5 The proposed changes to public funding for the agriculture industry, post Brexit, are likely to see potential for increased woodland cover in RCT. It would be encouraging if 'natural regeneration' options were available to farmers in appropriate locations such as RCT. It is also hoped that any future schemes ensure that there is full recognition of the multiple benefits and value of the existing natural and semi-natural habitats within our landscapes.
- 4.9.6 Commercial forestry, where tree planting is designed to produce a crop that is removed, does not increase carbon sequestration. The aim is to balance tree removal with replacement over the life of the crop. For a given land area, carbon sequestration is likely to be slightly negative due to the periodic impacts of repeated soil disturbance, drainage and operational inputs. This can still be beneficial where the timber is used as a replacement for more carbon-intensive materials, such as coal, bricks or plastic.

4.10 The water environment

- 4.10.1 The water environment is critically important for biodiversity and is another of 'natures assets' likely to be affected by climate change. Flood risk is one of the main areas for consideration.
- 4.10.2 In the 2018 UK climate impact programme, the revised projections highlighted the increasing risk of flooding developing as a result of climate change. These new projections for flood risk will be reflected in Welsh Government's draft 'National strategy for flood and coastal erosion risk management in Wales', due for publication in 2020 and are recognised in the outline for the new RCT corporate plan.
- 4.10.3 The restoration of upland peatbogs for carbon sequestration could also help to mitigate increased storm frequency and potentially higher rainfall by storing more water in the uplands. More generally, flood risk can be mitigated by changes to land management in catchments upstream of 'at risk' communities, often called Natural Flood Risk Management (NFM). The Healthy Hillides project will contribute towards NFM in some places and potentially, aspects of Welsh Government proposals for future agriculture support may contribute.
- 4.10.4 The Council produces a Flood Risk Management Strategy¹³ and this promotes NFM in appropriate locations. An example of a Rhondda Cynon Taf led project is at Cwmaman¹⁴. Natural Resources Wales have a pilot project at Cwmparc with the introduction of woody dams into the stream to slow the flow in addition to the peatbog restoration projects mentioned above.

4.11 Air Quality

- 4.11.1 An earlier report has outlined the causes and impacts of poor air quality in Rhondda Cynon Taf. It should be remembered that the natural world is affected by air pollution as well as people. For example, vehicle exhausts (in particular nitrogen dioxide) affects soils and contributes to detrimental changes in local biodiversity. This is not well understood. The only detailed investigation in RCT relates to European protected sites near the heads of the Valleys road. The use of Green Infrastructure to ameliorate air pollution is not straight forward and much bigger impacts will result from reductions in vehicle emissions. Using Green Infrastructure to promote and encourage active travel as a substitute for car journeys will contribute to improving air quality. The earlier Air Quality report (appendix table c) included examples of Green Infrastructure to tackle specific issues.

4.12 Landscape Strategy linking nature conservation and people

- 4.12.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf is a fantastic treasure trove of landscapes, habitats, flora and fauna. A biodiversity that has a rich cultural basis and is strongly tied to the complex geology and geomorphology of the County Borough. RCT is also a place with many expert, self-taught naturalists, local historians, and environmentally concerned and active people and groups. In RCT people and communities live within and surrounded by wildlife-rich habitats (the backdrop to our daily lives) and for everyone in RCT nature is only a short walk or stroll from their door step. An initiative that is currently being developed aims to link people and groups into a network of biodiversity rich sites, and to engage with people to visit, enjoy, record, and help to manage these sites to maximise their biodiversity and promote active communities. By developing a 'landscape scale' project, large scale funding such as the Heritage Lottery might be attracted. Initial discussions between Council staff, the Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation and number of local groups has established support for the idea.
- 4.12.2 Through the implementation of its planning function, the Council has secured a significant network of ecological mitigation sites across the County Borough. Some of these sites are Council adopted and have land management funding associated (from S106 agreements), while others are developer or management company owned but have specific S106 biodiversity management commitments and requirements. There is also a network of Council-owned and managed countryside and parks sites, cemeteries and land reclamation sites, together with partnership owned nature reserves and Community Council sites. When viewed on a map these commitments and opportunities form a network of often closely adjacent sites, linking communities with the wider countryside. It is a very significant resource of both wildlife-rich habitats and an amazing opportunity for people to become actively involved in helping to look after, care for, understand and interpret their own environment. We already have community groups with interest in a specific site who would welcome the opportunity to share expertise and volunteers with similar groups both locally and across RCT. In addition, there is a network of local people with a keen interest in engaging in both their local patch and the 'bigger picture'. Therefore a priority 'Action for Nature' action is the development in 2020/21 of a pilot 'living landscape project' within RCT. If successful, this would see a major new approach to biodiversity conservation and community engagement in RCT with long-term sustainability and continued biodiversity improvement.

4.13 Challenges

- 4.13.1 Some of the opportunities to promote Nature's Assets in the Council's response to Climate Change have been listed above. New legal duties and a higher profile for the Climate and Biodiversity emergencies provide major opportunities to move this agenda forward. These welcome opportunities come after a protracted period of funding difficulties for all public bodies. To realise these new opportunities consideration needs to be given to staffing numbers, expertise and revenue funding, and the need to build capacity in

local authorities, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), the specialist voluntary sector, NRW and Welsh Government. Close partnership working will be very important.

- 4.13.2 Current capacity will limit policy development, practical management works and engagement with the public and schools. The Biodiversity Duty (reported in Nov) has resulted in a welcome increase in the attention paid to ecology across Council services, but this poses challenges when the staff resource (1 ecologist) remains the same. The new sustainable drainage law and the new requirement for biodiversity enhancement by planning applicants are typical of increasing demand for the ecologist's input.
- 4.13.3 If the Council and its partners are to take forward this important agenda and develop some of the initiatives identified in this report, there will be a need to build resources, expertise and create additional capacity in both the Council and other partner organisations.
- 4.13.4 The Council will explore the potential for a Graduate Officer post to work with the ecologist and there may be opportunities for additional Apprentice roles to undertake work on countryside and grassland management. There are currently proposals to support an apprentice on tree management work and an increase in the revenue budget for tree works. The Council may also wish to consider additional resources to increase training and to support the mapping and data sets required to support the living landscape pilot, providing evidence of natural regeneration.
- 4.13.5 There is demand for increased support for environmental education, particularly in schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf. A graduate post, shared between Education and Streetcare is planned to work specifically with secondary schools. Similar provision to support education for sustainable development and global citizenship in primary schools may also be required.
- 4.13.6 Natural Resources Wales have a limited environmental education resource, which supports a network of Outdoor Learning Groups (including one for RCT and Merthyr) and Keep Wales Tidy promote Eco-Schools, in which many RCT schools participate. The RCT Education and Inclusion Services are currently developing a pilot project of up to seven schools that aims to enhance school grounds to promote biodiversity and outdoor learning.
- 4.13.7 In taking forward any recommendations arising from the recommendations of the steering group, the Council will need to quantify and consider the necessary resource implications.

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 This report explores issues, some of which have been discussed by the Local Biodiversity Action Plan partnership and specifically with Natural Resources Wales.
- 6.2 The views of this Steering Group will make an important contribution and inform the deliberations of Cabinet

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 As this report covers a number of new policy areas for the Council, there may be financial implications arising from future implementation. Some projects described, such as the 'Healthy Hillside' and 'Lost Peatland' projects have already obtained grant funding. There are likely to be some short-term Welsh government capital grant opportunities for 2020/21, in particular relating to Green Infrastructure. Where no funding is currently available, the Cabinet may require additional information before considering whether and how these issues should be addressed.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 is relevant. Part One covers the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and includes the Biodiversity Duty (S6). This part also sets the context for policy and action for the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales. Part Two considers climate change and informs Welsh Government policy in this regard.

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

- 9.1 The discussion of Natures' Assets contributes to the Council's priority to 'build a sustainable County Borough' as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2016-2020. It will contribute to the discussions about the next Corporate Plan for the period 2020 to 2024, which is likely to contain further consideration of the Climate and Biodiversity Emergencies.
- 9.2 Consideration of Natures Assets must reflect the five ways of working in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. In particular, this must be a long-term consideration, focused on preventative and precautionary action. It will contribute specifically to the Resilience and Global Responsibility goals of the Act, but in the longer term it could have implications for all the goals.

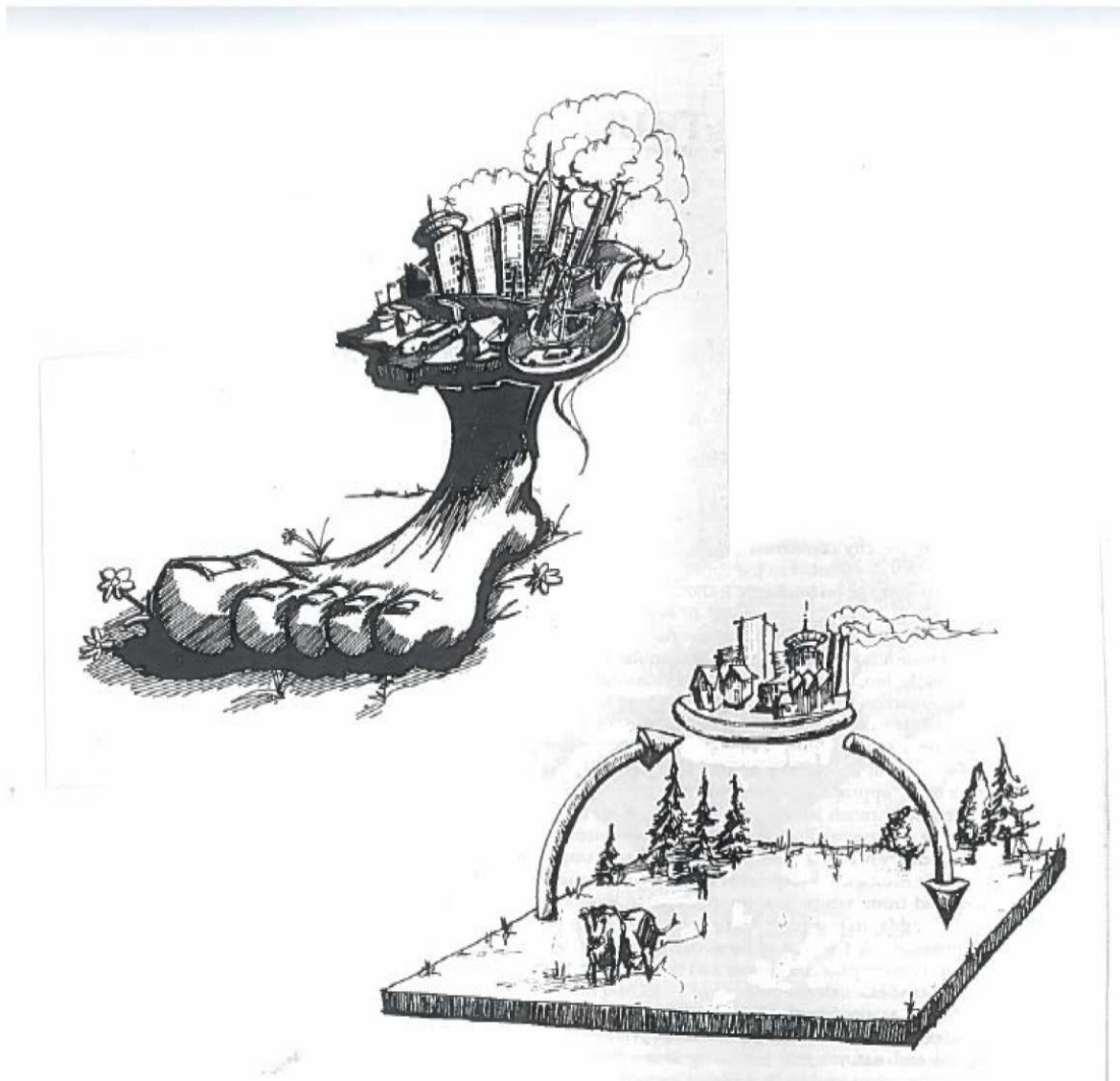
10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 Members of the Climate Control Cabinet Steering Group are requested to consider the information presented in this report and provide their observations to Cabinet.

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Appendix one: Ecological Footprint



‘What is an ecological footprint?

Think of an economy as having an ‘industrial metabolism’. In this respect, it is similar to a cow in its pasture. The economy needs to ‘eat’ resources, and eventually, all this intake becomes waste and has to leave the organism- the economy-again. So the question becomes: how big a pasture is necessary to support that economy – to produce all its feed and absorb all its waste? Alternatively, how much land would be necessary to support a defined economy sustainably at its current material standard of living?’

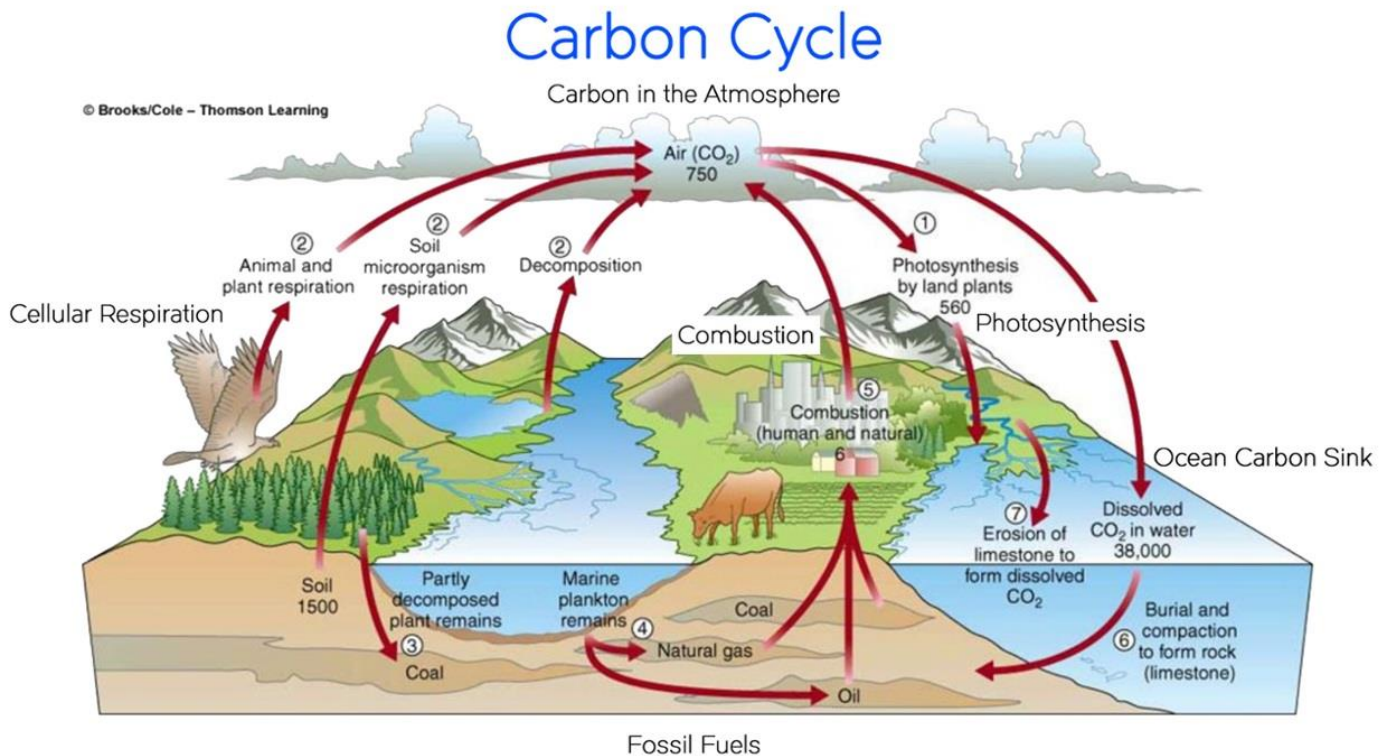
Our Ecological Footprint: Reducing Human Impact on the Earth: Mathis Wackernagel and William Rees

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-04/ecological-and-carbon-footprint-of-wales-report.pdf>

A more recent illustration is provided by Mike Berners Lee in the book 'There is no Planet B'. He calculates the travel miles possible using energy from a square metre of Californian land that is used for solar panels or growing wheat or willow grass.

	Miles per square metre per year
Electric Bike (PV)	21,243
Electric train (passenger miles, PV)	4033
Nissan leaf electric car (PV)	1081
Tesla electric car (PV)	927
Bike (bread powered)	45
Walking (bread power)	22
Airbus A380 (passenger miles biofuel from cellulose)	12
Biodiesel trail (passenger miles, wheat powered)	5
Biofuel car (willow powered)	5
Horse riding (wheat fed horse)	3
Biofuel car (wheat powered)	1

Appendix Two: The Carbon Cycle and carbon storage



From <http://www.thinglink.com/scene/979054305975730178>

Primo Levi's autobiography of short stories 'The Periodic Table' includes 'Carbon' as the final story.

<https://transitionnetwork.org/sites/www.transitionnetwork.org/files/CarbonStoryByPrimoLevi.pdf>

Carbon stock average estimates by broad habitat

Habitats	Carbon stock in soils (t Cha ⁻¹)	Carbon stock in vegetation (t Cha ⁻¹)
Dwarf shrub Heath	88	2
Acid grassland	87	1
Fen, mash and swamp	76	?
Bog	74	2
Coniferous woodland	70	70
Broad leaf,	63	70
Neutral grassland	60	1
Improved grasslands	59	1
Arable and horticulture	43	1
Coastal margins (UK)	48	?

From Natural England Research Report NERR043

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET STEERING GROUP

16TH NOVEMBER 2020

**STRATEGIC AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS - THEIR POLICIES
AND COMMITMENTS TO ENSURING HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION AND
BUSINESS INFRASTRUCTURE MINIMISES THE CARBON FOOTPRINT**

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Author: Owen Jones, Development Services Manager – Planning Policy

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to firstly set out what the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) and the Revised Local Development Plan (LDP), are required to address with regards to policies and commitments to minimise our Carbon Footprint.
- 1.2 Secondly, the report will set out the opportunities that will present themselves during the preparation and formulation of these plans, (particularly from an LDP perspective), to expand upon these standard requirements from an RCT perspective.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group:

- 2.1 Comment on the issues raised in this report, and in particular the discussion points set out in paragraphs 6.9 to 6.15
- 2.2 That the feedback and comments of the Steering Group are reported to Cabinet for their consideration.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The considerations in the report are those that need to be developed further as part of the Climate Change responsibilities and aspirations of Rhondda Cynon Taf, whilst they also need to be incorporated into the statutory revision process for the Revised LDP .

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf agreed on the 27th of November 2019 to progress with the preparation of a Revised LDP for the County Borough. This is to be further agreed by Welsh Government (WG), to formally begin the 3.5 year preparation process to its adoption at the end of 2023. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, it was not possible to begin the preparation of the Revised LDP in June as agreed, with an alternative starting date currently being considered. As an authority, we have also agreed on 31st July 2019, to be part of the preparation, the governance arrangements and contribute financially to the Cardiff Capital Region SDP. To date, 8 of the 10 authorities in the region have also agreed to this.
- 4.2 If an SDP is not forthcoming in the shorter term, then the LDP will be required to take on board more strategic consideration of climate change and its associated planning policy. If the SDP is forthcoming, then they will be included in either as appropriate. Accordingly, this paper will continue, unless stated otherwise, on a basis of what is required within an LDP and then what we as an authority can propose to have included within our LDP.

5. What is required in an LDP in relation to Climate Change and its Carbon Footprint

- 5.1 There is a significant amount of policy and legislative requirements within the planning system, and in particular the preparation of statutory Plans (SDP's/LDP'S), by both the Welsh and UK Governments in relation to Climate Change and our Carbon Footprint, the main elements of which are discussed below.

5.2 Legislation

- 5.3 In June 2019, the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) requested that the Welsh, Scottish and UK Government reassess the UK's long-term emissions targets following the publication of its paper *Net Zero – the UK's Contribution to Global Warming* in May 2019. In response, Wales accepted the CCC's recommendation for a 95% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and committed to go further with an ambition to reach 'net zero' by 2050. Given that all countries of the UK supported this, the Climate Change Act 2008 introduced an associated target amendment order in June 2019.
- 5.4 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 also required Welsh Government (WG) to set new interim emission reduction targets by the end of 2018. Such interim targets relate to 2020, 2030 and 2040 and should be published c. two years prior to the interim date. WG are committed to reducing emissions by 40% by 2020 (below 1990 levels) however this target was also set out in their Climate Change Strategy (2010).

- 5.5 WG have been committed to cutting emissions and transitioning to a low carbon economy for a number of years and in March 2019, published *Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales*. The publication seeks to maximise wider benefits for Wales, ensuring a fairer, healthier and more equal society. The plan *pulls together 76 existing pieces of policy from across the Welsh Government, UK Government and the EU where decarbonisation is integrated either as a direct outcome or a wider benefit*. Some are new policy, such as the Renewable Energy Targets and improved policy in *Planning Policy Wales (Ed. 10)*, where decarbonisation is a central pillar.
- 5.6 The ambitions also stem from the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act's seven well-being goals and five ways of working. The strategy also highlights the role the National Development Framework (which is the development plan prepared by WG for all of Wales) needs to play in driving sustainable growth and combating climate change by guiding strategic development over the next 20 years.
- 5.7 National Development Framework
- 5.8 The Draft National Development Framework (NDF), released in August 2019, also has tackling the causes and mitigating the effects of climate change as a key consideration. Climate change is specifically mentioned in the NDF section on '*Challenges and Opportunities*'. The plan acknowledges that climate change and the decline of biodiversity are global challenges that are the biggest issues faced by Wales. It states that *Addressing this is our greatest responsibility when considering the legacy we will leave for future generations and as a consequence we have declared a Climate Emergency* (Welsh Government, 2019, p15).
- 5.9 The NDF commits to decarbonising Wales, delivering healthy, resilient eco-systems, encouraging sustainable energy generation, responsible water resource management, contributing the success of the circular economy, seeking the production of zero carbon homes and encouraging sustainable travel.
- 5.10 Any replacement LDP will need to reflect these targets in its vision, strategy, objectives and policies. This will be achieved by developing robust evidence in order to ensure that it can contribute to tackling climate change in a meaningful way. It will need to be ensured however that any prospective allocations are viable and deliverable, with any proposed new requirements for low or zero carbon homes and contributions to CIL/S106.

5.11 Planning Policy Wales

- 5.12 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Edition 10, December 2018) is then the key overarching planning policy document in Wales, giving policy for decision making at a national level, whilst also indicating what policy principles should be cascaded down into LDP, local level policy. PPW 10 advocates making the best use of resources, which is one of its 'key planning principles'. The policy recognises that the planning system has a vital role to play in making development resilient to climate change, decarbonising society and developing the circular economy for the benefit of both the built and natural environment and to contribute to the well-being goals.
- 5.13 PPW encourages that the 'proximity principle' is applied to ensure that problems are solved locally and are not passed on to other places or future generations. It has a focus on strategic placemaking, using a spatial strategy to locate development to promote sustainable development. This includes minimising the need to travel through the location of housing, services and employment. Additionally, PPW10 has introduced the Sustainable Transport Hierarchy, which Welsh Government require must be used to determine applications and when preparing an LDP. It prioritises walking, cycling and public transport ahead of private motor vehicles, though it does recognise that electric vehicles also play an important role in sustainable transport.
- 5.14 Additionally, it promotes more sustainable travel choices, network management and demand management in order to increase physical activity, improve health and help to tackle the causes of climate change and airborne pollution. Paragraph 5.3 'Transportation Infrastructure' states that the planning system should facilitate the delivery, decarbonisation and improvement of transport infrastructure in a way that reduces travel and the use of private vehicles. At 5.3.6 planning authorities must promote and facilitate the provision and decarbonisation of high quality public transport infrastructure.
- 5.15 Section 5.7 also seeks to ensure that all new development mitigates the causes of climate change in accordance with the energy hierarchy for planning. *Reducing energy demand and increasing energy efficiency, through the location and design of new development, will assist in meeting energy demand with renewable and low carbon sources. This is particularly important in supporting the electrification of energy use, such as the growing use of electric vehicles (p89).*
- 5.16 Paragraph 5.8 'Renewable and Low Carbon Energy' sets out that planning authorities should facilitate all forms of renewable and low carbon energy development. In doing so, planning authorities should seek to ensure their area's full potential for renewable and low carbon energy generation is maximised and renewable energy targets are

achieved. This would include the re-powering, Life Extension, Decommissioning and Remediation of the infrastructure.

- 5.17 Paragraph 4.1.39 encourages the use of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs), and the support of the provision of ULEV charging points as part of new development. Where car parking is provided for new non-residential development, planning authorities should seek a minimum of 10% of car parking spaces to have ULEV charging points. Paragraph 4.1.42 Planning authorities should take a strategic approach to ULEV charging in their area and, where appropriate, develop policies in their development plan and specify local requirements.
- 5.18 The Council will need to take account of these and other policies expressed throughout Planning Policy Wales and ensure that it is translated (without repetition) down to the local level where appropriate.

6. Revising the Rhondda Cynon Taf LDP

6.1 Revised LDP Preparation

- 6.2 The current RCT LDP (2011-2021) seeks to contain development within settlements and to identify appropriate new urban growth sites where required. Policies aim to reduce the need to travel by providing sites for employment and services as well as housing and promoting regeneration in sustainable locations. Planning policy also seeks to ensure high standards of amenity in all new developments as well as promoting active travel. This minimises damaging land-use change, which could affect carbon storage in soils, vegetation and trees.

- 6.3 Whilst climate change is not a 'new' challenge, the way in which it is tackled does put many authorities into 'unchartered waters'. Whilst legislation, policy and guidance in Wales and all over the UK is heavily focused on tackling the causes of climate change, in reality, there are very few proposed solutions. As such, Rhondda Cynon Taf will need to be creative in responding to the challenges of climate change whilst still bringing forth viable development.

- 6.4 The preparation of the Revised LDP over the next 3 years will be just that – a revision of the current Plan. This will identify the necessary growth of development up to 2030. However, all elements of the Plan will need to be fully re-evaluated through the official preparatory stages from Visioning (including the identification of aims and objectives), Preferred Strategy and then the Deposit (Draft) Plan. Each of these stages will need to ensure that the progressive and current climate change legislation and associated planning policy, as discussed above, are appropriately addressed

- 6.5 It is through these preparatory stages that all stakeholders can propose how we take forward the Climate Change and Carbon Neutral associated aims and proposals, beyond the current planning policy standard requirements. The vision, aims and objectives of the plan may influence an amended LDP Preferred Strategy in the first instance, with more emphasis on the climate change agenda, more so than perhaps existing sustainable development growth.
- 6.6 Policies can then be prepared and formulated that give local distinctiveness and aspirations to Climate Change, albeit ensuring that they are led by clear evidence for need and realistic deliverability. Similarly, the identification of suitable sites for allocation for the necessary land uses e.g. housing, employment, retail, leisure etc follow nationally prescribed and our own bespoke standards. This is in relation to the amount, type and in particular, their location.
- 6.7 A series of groups will be involved in the preparation of the Revised LDP, including community councils, community groups, the public, key consultees such as NRW, Cadw, Coal Authority etc, private developers and commercial bodies amongst others.
- 6.8 All Elected Members will be given their opportunity to have a say on the LDP at various stages, and we are currently in the process of creating a specific RCT Members Forum through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to make a formal contribution to the preparation stages of the Plan. It may be appropriate that members from this group propose to sit on this Forum, or otherwise ensure close consultation between the two. The group itself can contribute at various stages as appropriate through consultation events and stages.
- 6.9 **Considerations for the LDP for the Climate Change Group to Contribute To**
- 6.10 Throughout the forthcoming early preparatory stages of the Revised LDP, there are a number of areas/topics that can be researched further with regards to their relationship with Climate Change and Carbon Reduction; and ultimately considered for inclusion within it. Some questions that the group could consider further at this point include:
- What percentage of car parking spaces should have charging points in new non-residential developments?
 - Should there be a similar policy for new residential developments?
 - Should all new homes in RCT be built as zero carbon?
 - What is the role of RCTs uplands in combating Climate Change
 - What is the group's view on the density of development around Metro nodes and car free policies on new development?

6.11 *What percentage of car parking spaces should have charging points in new non-residential developments?*

National policy suggests a requirement for new non-residential development to seek a minimum of 10% of car parking spaces to have ULEV (electric) charging points. There is nothing to prevent the Council from being more ambitious in this area and formulating higher standards. However, it should be emphasised that any policies proposed will need to be based on robust evidence and will need to be measurable in terms of implementation/success and be commercially deliverable.

6.12 *Should there be a similar policy for new residential developments?*

Why shouldn't all new homes be provided with at least one dedicated outdoor, weather proof electric vehicle charging point? Cost is one issue that needs further investigation as the viability of house building in some parts of RCT is already marginal but that's not to say the starting position in the LDP is to seek to achieve such a policy. Consideration needs to be given to whether any technicalities are specified in the policy given that technologies can change rapidly over time. Consideration also needs to be given to the level of charging points in communal parking spaces.

6.13 *Should all new homes in RCT be built as zero carbon?*

Although building control standards are currently being considered by Welsh Government, there may be further opportunity to seek that new homes are built towards zero carbon or at least a performance above the current building regulations. It is important to consider what should the definition of zero carbon be in the LDP insofar as it relates to new homes?

- Does it apply only to 'regulated energy' - those fixed and integral services and fittings in the home such as the space heating, hot water, ventilation and lighting - or also to 'unregulated energy' including things a developer can't as easily control such as those used through plug-in appliances and cooking?
- Does it relate to just a home's day-to-day operational energy use or to life-cycle carbon emissions, including that embedded in its construction?
- Does it apply to each home individually, or development-wide (or by phase for larger schemes), whereby some homes may not need to meet the standard, if the development as a whole does?
- Does it include or exclude potential off-setting arrangements where the homes themselves might not be zero carbon, but offset payments have

been made (for example into a fund to allow the Council to improve energy efficiency in older housing stock)?

Zero carbon might refer to all or any of these but its meaning will have implications for the form of development and its viability.

6.14 *What is the role of RCTs uplands in combating Climate Change*

Historically, development plans such as the LDP have focussed on managing development in and around urban areas with little more than a presumption against development in areas such as the uplands of RCT. However, more consideration will need to be given to the value of these areas and the role they can play. For example, our upland peat bogs have a significant role in carbon storage but also a potential role in managing water storage for flood prevention - are these roles mutually exclusive? The upland areas have significant potential to support wind and solar energy development but these developments along with their associated infrastructure have the potential to compromise the hydrology of the peat bog ecosystem. The intrinsic quality of our uplands has the potential to support a significant increase in the tourism economy in RCT so what considerations will the LDP need to balance the benefits to the local economy from increased development and visitors in the uplands alongside the potential detrimental impacts this could have on the environment.

6.15 *What is the group's view on the density of development around Metro nodes and car free policies on new development?*

The LDP will certainly need to take into consideration the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Metro and electrification of the South Wales Central Valley Line. Not only should this improve air quality from current rolling stock, but we must also capitalise on this investment. All opportunities should be sought to identify land for development around these public transport nodes. Furthermore, these are often located within existing urban centres. However, the density of development in towns has long been a point of contention in the determination of planning applications with space standards and the level of off street parking in particular being regular reasons for refusal of applications for new flats and apartments. The views of the group on how the LDP should balance these issues would be welcome.

6.16 Listed in Appendix 1 of this report, below, are summaries of Plans and Policies of other Local Authorities relating to this Climate Change and carbon reduction agenda. As this Appendix indicates, there are relatively few examples across the UK of such good practice, although it is not so say that this list is an exhaustive one.

7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

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

8 CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1 The views of this Steering Group will make an important contribution and inform the deliberations of Cabinet, whilst also informing the preparatory and consultation stages of the revision of the LDP.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 It is considered that any financial implications from this report will be associated with the formulation of the required evidence base for the preparation of the Revised LDP.

10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 The proposals will be considered through the preparation process of the statutory revision of the LDP.

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

- 11.1 Preparation of the revised LDP will embrace the principles of the Corporate Plan, along with the wellbeing goals and five ways of working as identified within the *WBFG Act*. The revised LDP will also be guided by the aims and objectives set forth in the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan 2018-2023 entitled *Our Cwm Taf*. The revised plan will also be influenced by the cultural, economic, environmental and social well-being goals and objectives within *Our Cwm Taf*, where they relate to land-use planning.

12 CONCLUSION

- 12.1 Members of the Climate Control Cabinet Steering Group are requested to consider the information presented in this report and provide their observations to Cabinet.

Appendix 1 – Examples of other Authority’s Plans and Policies.

Swansea Local Development Plan

Swansea Council adopted the Local Development Plan (LDP) for their area in February 2019, and forms the statutory development plan for Swansea Council. It promotes a placemaking agenda and the WG well-being objectives. Some policies contained within the LDP specifically make reference to decarbonisation or carbon neutral ambitions, as detailed below;

- Chapter 1 – Plan Strategy details greater resilience needs to build into energy supply, and energy efficiency needs to be promoted as a means of supporting decarbonisation. Locally identified energy infrastructure and renewable energy generation to help meet carbon reduction requirements, such as Swansea Bay tidal lagoon.
- Strategic Objectives 6 – Encourage appropriate development of low carbon and renewable energy resources and energy infrastructure.
- Policy PS 2 Placemaking and Place Management includes criteria that developments should: *“Maximise opportunities for sustainable construction, resource efficiency and contributions towards increased renewable or low carbon energy generation”*
- Policy SD 2 Masterplanning Principles includes development should *“integrate opportunities where appropriate to minimise carbon emissions associated with the heating, cooling and power systems for new development”*
- Policy ER 1 Climate Change includes development proposals should take into *“reducing carbon emissions”* and *“promoting energy and resource efficiency and increasing the supply of renewable and low carbon energy”*. The policy expands to say a reduction in carbon emissions will be achieved by means of controlling the energy demand associated with development through maximising energy efficiency. Secondly, sustainable sources of energy should be incorporated, without reliance on fossil fuels. Information about carbon sinks acting as a means of off-setting carbon emissions by natural means.
- Policy EU 1 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Proposal sets out the criteria for low carbon energy development.
- Policy EU 2 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Technology in New Development. Development will be required to maximise the contribution of renewable or low carbon energy technology to meet the energy demands of the proposal, particularly for Significant Energy Consuming Developments.

Swansea Council operate Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles for their public sector fleet.

Merthyr Tydfil LDP

Key issues identified as part of the LDP include the quality and energy efficiency of the existing housing.

Home energy use is the primary cause of local Green House Gas emissions. Carbon budgeting is set to drive demand for renewable and low carbon energy.

The LDP makes clear that the plan can't deliver all local wellbeing outcomes, as many issues extend beyond 'land-use planning' influences. However, the LDP contributes to creating the right conditions to support their delivery.

LDP Objective 6: 'Sustainable Design' To promote high quality, sustainable and inclusive design and support measures which mitigate the predicted effects of climate change. The plan objectives will help deliver on the vision, and have been identified with regard to local issues raised through consultation.

LDP Objective 7 Transport: To support an integrated transport system, promote active travel and ensure new developments are accessible by walking, cycling and public transport links.

LDP Objective 16 Renewable Energy: To promote renewable and low carbon energy.

Renewable energy presents an opportunity to reduce carbon emissions and generate income. The Plan has been informed by a Renewable Energy Assessment (2017) that has identified areas of opportunity. Contributing towards renewable energy generation is supported by the Plan through the inclusion of positive policies for renewable energy and the identification of Heat Priority Areas, where opportunities for district heating could be exploited, and Local Search Areas for solar energy. A local contribution target towards renewable energy production is also included in the Plan's monitoring framework.

Joint Transport Plan for South West Wales

New technologies for electric vehicles could lead to a step change in connectivity and function and form of transport networks. Swansea and Carmarthenshire authority areas have introduced electric vehicles fleet for council use. Scheme proposals to implement a network of electric vehicle charging points across South West Wales.

London Borough of Merton – Case Study

In 2003, Merton introduced a planning policy that required all new build

developments to generate 10% of their electricity from on-site renewable sources. This has been adopted further across the UK and is known as the 'Merton Rule'.

The local plan includes sustainability standards, such as an overarching policy that sets out "new development should be designed to minimise emissions arising throughout their lifetime". The plan also includes a Policy EP H6 Environmental Protection which sets out how proposals must contribute to improving air quality and applicants must investigate the feasibility of CHP and district heating schemes.

Climate change and energy performance is detailed as information that should be provided in support of planning applications to Merton Council. An energy strategy should be provided for each site that demonstrates environmental improvements.

Merton Council declared a Climate Emergency, and is in the process of developing a Climate Change Action Plan for the council area. The council has also previously produced a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2014-2017 that sets out how the council intends to tackle climate change. The strategy includes areas such as energy, planning and development, sustainable resources and the natural environment.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET STEERING GROUP
UPDATE REPORT**

30th SEPTEMBER 2020

**CORPORATE ESTATES UPDATE REPORT ON
ENERGY GENERATION AND RELATED ISSUES**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE ESTATES IN DISCUSSION
WITH THE CABINET'S CLIMATE CHANGE CHAMPION (COUNCILLOR
RHYS LEWIS)**

**Author(s): David Powell, Director of Corporate Estates and Steve Lock,
Head of Energy Project Management.**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update relating to the position of the work of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group up to 30/09/20. Following the suspension of various Council meetings as a result of the Flooding and Coronavirus situations, the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group has not met since January 2020 and this update report provides details of the current situation with regards to the work underway on the development of renewable energy projects and certain other related issues.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members;

- 2.1 Note the contents of this update report as part of the ongoing work of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group.
- 2.2 Agree to continue with ongoing discussions with third parties with a view to maximising the energy generation subject to the final Welsh Government carbon footprint calculator.
- 2.3 Receive a further report in early 2021 providing a further update on progress.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The contents of this report provides background information and update on the current situation with regards to the issues covered by the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group. It provides an update on the proposals for the Council to build and finance potential solar and wind schemes on Council or other public sector owned land that will make a significant contribution to the Council achieving its Carbon Neutral target. It also provides an update on some other areas which have relevance for the development of the renewable energy projects.

4. CURRENT ENERGY GENERATION STRATEGIES

- 4.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has a long-established programme of investing in Energy Generation measures and this has included the installation of renewable Energy technology with over 100 Solar panel arrays being installed across both Schools and Corporate Buildings totalling 1.58 MW.
- 4.2. In addition to the investment in Solar energy above there has also been progress on other initiatives;
- The Taffs Well Thermal Spring Project is currently underway and when completed will make use of renewable geo-thermal/underground energy using water from the River Taff.
 - Support was previously provided for the development of a community micro-hydro scheme at Clydach.
- 4.3 The Carbon Reduction Programme (formerly known as the Invest to Save Programme) for Financial Year 2020/21 has been approved to invest around £1.2m on energy and carbon reduction improvements, subject to resources being available. Furthermore, a list of other potential energy efficiency projects with longer viability periods has also been developed for further consideration and possible additional investment.

5. CURRENT RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS SITUATION

- 5.1 The Corporate Estates Energy team has recently been investigating the potential of using RCT-owned land for the development of major renewable Energy projects for both Wind and Solar generation, with the assistance of the Welsh Government Energy Service. These are projects which would be primarily developed by Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and as such would both contribute to the increase in the renewable energy provision and carbon reduction in the area and also make a positive economic contribution to the financial situation of the County Borough which could then be invested in further related improvements or other services for the benefit of citizens.

- 5.2 As the first stage of this process a number of sites across RCT were appraised with regards to the various aspects of their viability. As a result of this process a number of sites were not taken forward to the next stage which involved a more in depth appraisal and detailed discussions with the electricity network provider Western Power Distribution and other interested third parties.
- 5.3 The projects which proceeded to the next stage of the process of evaluating the technical, financial and carbon reduction viability were;
- Project 1 - A 9 MW wind farm installation
 - Project 2 - A 9 MW wind farm installation
 - Project 3 - A 3 MW wind farm installation
 - Project 4 - A 6 MW solar farm installation

For these four projects various information has been obtained from Western Power Distribution (WPD) and further site analysis conducted. Each of them has been considered on both an RCT-only basis and also on a potential collaboration basis with third party organisations.

- 5.4 For the Wind farm installations referred to in projects 1 & 2, discussions have also been held with National Resources Wales (NRW) with regards to the possibility of a joint development of larger wind farms and preferably with RCT Council taking the lead role via an arrangement to lease the relevant land from NRW to develop larger facilities. Prior to the last few months these discussions had not developed strongly but recent changes in NRW have led to more positive discussions about the viability of a direct relationship with RCT Council rather than the lesser option of access over NRW land (and therefore developing Wind turbines on current RCT land only). These outline discussions with NRW are expected to progress to an 'agreement in principle' on the nature of the future relationship during the coming period with a clear picture of the technical and financial options for these two Wind farm sites.

There are several different scenarios for Projects 1 and 2 of the Wind farm projects both for RCT development only and for a combined RCT & NRW land development. If we are successful with NRW negotiations, the projects could increase from 9 MW to 16.45 and 15 MW projects respectively. However, these would require significantly more investment but would almost double the energy generation which could significantly offset our carbon footprint for energy consumption across our built asset portfolio.

Outline details of the various options for Projects 1 and 2 including the estimated development cost options, carbon benefits and related

financial payback periods are given in Appendix 1. For example the largest RCT and NRW land combined option for both sites is for 31MW of Wind Power with 12 wind turbines (7 at Project 1 site and 5 at Project 2 site) and this option would also generate an estimated Carbon Benefit of 25,739 Carbon Tonnes per annum.

- 5.5 For the Wind farm Project 3 (currently based on a single 3 MW wind turbine) this was not initially progressed to the same level of investigative detail as the other two Wind Farm sites due to the Grid connection issues and the lesser scale of generation potential. However, further discussions have progressed with a third party which owns the adjacent private wind farm. These had focused primarily on building a single RCT Turbine next to the adjacent site but the third party have recently suggested some other options regarding potential partnerships on the site (including RCT investment) and these discussions are ongoing to fully understand the implications and viability.

Outline details of the estimated development cost options and related financial payback periods are also given in Appendix 1. For illustrative purposes the development of a single 3MW RCT turbine on the land adjacent to the third party site would also generate an estimated Carbon Benefit of 2,323 Carbon Tonnes per annum.

- 5.6 For the Project 4 Solar Farm project there were substantial discussions with a potential third party partner whereby they would be supplied directly by a Private Wire arrangement. When these discussions were ceased by the potential third party it was then agreed that work on the Solar Farm option would proceed on an RCT only basis. This is continuing and a formal Grid connection application has recently been made to Western Power for a 5MW connection.

Outline details of the estimated development cost options and related financial payback periods are given in Appendix 1. For illustrative purposes the development of a 6 MW Solar Farm (with a 5 MW grid connection) on the Project 4 site would generate an estimated Carbon Benefit of 1,706 Carbon Tonnes per annum.

- 5.7 As part of the ongoing preparations, Ecology study work has already been commissioned for the projects and has commenced for the Project 4 Solar Farm site and is being extended to Project sites 1 and 2. This work can also be extended to the Project 3 site if the discussions with the third party progress satisfactorily.

- 5.8 A budget of £80K is available from existing resources to fund various investigations and necessary work to enable a report to be drafted with further details. This report will include data regarding the optimum size of the installations, the energy outputs, the carbon reductions and financial information for capital expenditure, capital funding and revenue income generated.

6. POTENTIAL EXPANSION OF RENEWABLE ENERGY AMBITIONS

- 6.1 Further work is also scheduled to look at those sites previously identified on the first stage list of RCT sites for Wind or Solar renewable generation but which were not progressed at that time to the next stage of the analysis. The work will include whether the sites could be made viable by the addition of other land on a purchase, lease or partnership basis and will be informed by the current liaison process with Western Power and the ARUP report on the electricity network in Rhondda Cynon Taf which is expected to be received in early October. This work was scoped just prior to the Flooding and Coronavirus situations and as such has been delayed but is due recommence shortly.
- 6.2 The feasibility of installing Solar generating car ports at RCT sites has also been examined with the specific possibility of a first installation trial at a Leisure Centre subject to the outcome of a feasibility study. A case study has been scoped and the larger of the two options has an estimated cost of circa. £528K based on a payback period of 16.8 years and could generate 241,158kWh of renewable Solar Energy with a dedicated 'Private Wire' connection to the Leisure Centre. A feasibility study for this project has recently been prepared for final consideration.
- 6.3 The potential of Battery storage and usage options will also be considered as part of the wider examination of technologies. We are specifically looking at the potential inclusion of battery storage as part of several larger roof top solar projects such as Rhondda Sports Centre and Ty Elai as part of the Carbon Reduction Programme referred to in paragraph 4.3 above. However the progression will be partially dependent on the costs at the design stage.
- 6.4 The potential of Hydrogen for fuel cells and vehicles is also being considered. Several meetings have taken place with Welsh Government about potential Hydrogen networks but costs are prohibitively high at this stage.

- 6.5 The Taffs Well Thermal Spring project is well underway and both Planning permission and Natural Resources Wales approval have recently been received. Tenders have also been received and whilst the project costs were higher than originally estimated a process of design refinement has been undertaken which has reduced the cost. The current anticipated project cost is £326k. Completion is scheduled to be by March 2021 to coincide with the original end date of the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme (it has recently been extended for projects commenced by December 2020 but we are still awaiting full details of the revised conditions).
- 6.6 The potential of the various water resources within RCT is also currently being investigated and discussions regarding the future potential using Minewater have been held with Bridgend Council who have a large project already underway (which is largely externally financed). Other water/hydro projects which were previously regarded as not being viable many years ago could also be re-examined but this would probably require an external resource to undertake the work.

7. RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS SITUATION AT AMGEN CYMRU

- 7.1 Amgen Cymru is a private limited company wholly owned by RCT Council. The Company delivers waste transport, treatment, recycling and disposal services to the Council and other customers within South East Wales. To date their main involvement in renewable energy production has come from the generation of electricity from Landfill Gas. This is a Biogas rich in Methane which is produced as a result of the breakdown of biodegradable waste within a landfill. This is considered to be a form of renewable energy and has historically qualified for the Renewable Obligation subsidy.
- 7.2 The power generation scheme at Bryn Pica has operated since 2003 and has continued to contribute towards the replacement of regional electrical demand from fossil fuel sources. At its peak, the scheme exported 1.9 MW/hr of electrical energy, however the diversion of biodegradable waste from landfill in accordance with EU and regional government policy has resulted in a diminishing resource going forward. Current export rates are around 0.8 MW/hr and this is predicted to drop to 0.6 MW/hr by 2027.
- 7.3 Estimates indicate that 1.2 – 1.4 MWs of redundant export capacity exists at Bryn Pica. In terms of potential future renewable schemes, this is an asset which the Company is keen to utilise and is currently working through technical and contractual complexities in this respect. This could

facilitate reasonably rapid deployment of solar, wind or other generating technology commercially viable at that scale.

- 7.4 The Company also has a much smaller landfill generating station at the Nant-y-Gwyddon Landfill Site (closed in 2001). This is currently producing around 0.05 MW/hr. Previously power generation at the site peaked at 0.65 MW/hr and as such there is redundant export capacity at the site. Recent work done on the local electricity network has indicated that an export connection of 0.8 MWs could be provided at the site, with relatively minor expenditure. Amgen have been mindful of this benefit and has investigated the deployment of both wind and solar generation at the site.
- 7.5 Discussions with 'Infinite Renewables' regarding the development and operation of a single wind turbine have progressed through Aug-20. Amgen Officers have meet with the developers to review civil engineering works required at the site in order to facilitate the construction work. RCT Corporate Estates are in the process of reviewing the land title and Amgen lease with a view to offering a 20 year operating lease to the wind developer. Consideration has been given to the best form of such an agreement and it is proposed that RCTCBC will contract / lease directly with the wind developer and receive rental payments directly.
- 7.6 The Bryn Pica Facility is also home to the Tomorrows Valley Food Waste Treatment Plant, owned and operated by a private contractor, BioGen (Bryn Pica) Ltd. This facility operates using the Anaerobic Digestion technology and recycles separately collected food waste from RCT, Merthyr and Newport council. The AD Plant at Bryn Pica generates and exports electrical electricity with a capacity of circa 1 MW/hr. In addition, the plant produces large volumes of waste heat a significant proportion of which is not currently being utilised for any beneficial purpose.
- 7.7 In accordance with central government and regional government policy, Amgen has outlined a scheme for the potential utilisation of waste heat generated at the Bryn Pica facility. The potential carbon offsetting benefits of community and commercial / industrial heat networks has been clearly documented and can form part of the solution to reducing carbon emission. However, the technical and economic challenges of connecting heat producers to consumers has resulted in significant underdevelopment of heat networks within Wales and the UK in general. Working with the Council and Welsh Government Amgen are facilitating the development of an Eco Park on an area of undeveloped land at Bryn Pica.

7.8 At the point of development this small industrial park will target commercial tenants operating within the sustainability sector (waste, recycling and energy sustainability), particularly those that can gain benefits from the use of waste heat and renewable electrical energy. The scheme has generated much interest to date and has been supported through outline development and site preparation by Welsh Government funding. Detailed design is currently ongoing and the project team is considering funding options for full build out costs.

8. OTHER ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS RELEVANT TO THE CURRENT RENEWABLE ENERGY SITUATION

8.1 Western Power Distribution Update

RCT Council has had regular contact with Western Power Distribution (WPD) over many years but this contact has extended since the exercise to look at potential Renewable Energy project began in 2018. More recently, in April 2020 we were contacted directly by WPD via the Chief Executive explaining how WPD wishes to *'engage with all the Local Authorities within Wales in respect of energy planning to achieve the Government's target of Net Zero carbon emissions by 2050'*. This is related to the changing role of WPD in the next few years from a DNO Distribution Network Operator to a DSO Distribution Systems Operator. This will have substantial implications for their role in the overall electricity marketplace and as part of this they will have a more proactive role in managing local generation up into the network as well as their traditional role of managing large scale generation down through the network to users.

As part of the process RCT has provided a considerable amount of information to WPD. The discussions with WPD have been very positive and there are firm plans for an ongoing dialogue process to provide mutual information and assistance. The first of these follow up meetings took place in July and also included a slot for ARUP. As part of this meeting WPD confirmed their commitment to ongoing dialogue and to provide ARUP with certain information that they would need to compile their report on the Energy network in the RCT Council area. (see 8.2 below). It was also agreed that the next meeting between RCT and WPD will take place once the ARUP report on the RCT Energy network has been finalised and received.

8.2 ARUP Update

Following consideration of the ongoing Energy network information requirements and the existing RCT resource, ARUP consultancy have

been appointed to carry out a specific study of the Energy network in RCT, including its constraints, topography and opportunities. ARUP recently carried out a similar Wales-wide study for Welsh Government but it lacked specific information for RCT. This RCT specific study will follow similar principles but with an RCT level of granularity. The process is ongoing (including the joint meeting with WPD, and the information provided by, WPD to ARUP as referenced above in paragraph 8.1) and the report is expected in early October. This relationship should also offer RCT the facility to use this specialist additional resource as necessary such as to assist with a new review of Water/Hydro opportunities within RCT.

8.3 Welsh Government Energy issues update

As part of the wider RCT Renewable Energy and Carbon neutral strategy there is an ongoing and useful relationship with the various aspects of the Welsh Government Energy Service (WGES). They have provided significant assistance at various stages of the Renewable Projects and RCT has also recently completed an application for further WGES assistance with a project to examine and identify the potential and costs of RCT moving to an Electric Vehicle Fleet option (known as ULEV).

The other current Welsh Government issue is the ongoing lack of final clarity on the Carbon Footprint calculator guidance and what criteria will be applied to which activities public sector bodies in Wales will be able to claim as being 'Carbon beneficial'. The position is still being finalised by Welsh Government but the initial indication at this stage was that we may only be able to 'claim' Renewable Energy that is directly used. This stance would have significant implications and formal representations about our concerns have already been made to Welsh Government (as have some other Local Authorities).

8.4 Cardiff Capital Region Energy Strategy

As part of the ongoing work of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal team they have recently produced a Regional Energy Strategy. The overall objective of this strategy is to outline and develop a strategic pathway identifying key interventions to deliver on the Capital Region's ambitions for decarbonising its Energy systems in order to meet Welsh Government targets, and to be on track for Net Zero by 2050.

The content of the report was outlined by the City Deal team on a 30th September meeting call to largely Energy-related staff across the City Region. With the support of the Welsh Government Energy Service they will be instituting a programme of briefings and information to the

10 Local Authorities before formally presenting the Strategy to the Cardiff City Region Cabinet meeting in December 2020.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required with regard to this report.

10. CONSULTATION

10.1 There are no consultation requirements at present with regards to this supporting report.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

11.1 All existing 'live' projects are funded through relevant cost centres and an existing enabling budget so there are no further financial implications aligned to this interim report.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report

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

13.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update relating to the work of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group with regards to the work underway on the development of renewable energy projects and certain other related issues.
The future actions that arise as a result of the future recommendations of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group report will be considered by the Council's Cabinet and it will take full regard to the seven national wellbeing goals.

14. CONCLUSION

14.1 This update report provides information relating to the work of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group meeting with regards to the work underway on the development of renewable energy projects and certain other related issues.

Contact Officers; David Powell 01443 424144, Steve Lock 01443 281191

Appendix 1 – Potential Energy Generation Projects

Appendix 1 – Energy Generation, Carbon Savings and Indicative Financial Information

Project		Annual Energy Generation (MW Hours)	Annual Carbon Reduction (Tonnes)	Total Capital Investment (£M)	Total Revenue Costs (£M)	Total Income from Energy Generation (£M)	Net Revenue Position (-Surplus/ +Deficit) (£M)
1a	9MW Wind farm RCT only	21,374	6,515	15.406	29.804	(29.011)	0.793
1b	16MW Wind farm RCT & NRW	47,717	14,545	25.094	53.535	(64.766)	(11.231)
2a	9MW Wind farm RCT Only	22,033	6,716	14.207	28.200	(29.906)	(1.706)
2b	15MW Wind farm RCT & NRW	36,722	11,194	21.808	45.816	(49.843)	(4.027)
3	3MW Wind farm RCT Only	7,620	2,323	3.161	7.154	(9.685)	(2.531)
4	6MW Solar farm RCT Only	5,598	1,706	4.811	13.099	(15.771)	(2.672)

Summary of RCT & NRW Projects

31MW Wind farms RCT & NRW	84,439	25,739	46.902	99.351	(114.609)	(15.258)
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Notes and Assumption

- 1) Wind projects are evaluated over 20 years and solar projects over 35 years;
- 2) Total Capital Investment includes construction costs, grid connections, fees, contingency/risk and project management;
- 3) It is assumed that the Capital Investment will be funded (subject to approval) by prudential borrowing;
- 4) Total Revenue Costs include operating and maintenance costs, insurance, metering and electricity, business rates, systems costs and borrowing repayments;
- 5) Total Revenue Costs and Total Income from Energy Generation are whole life costs over the economic project lives, subject to inflation and show real prices (in cash terms) not adjusted to show net present values.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2020/2021

CABINET

28TH JANUARY 2021

WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN – ANNUAL UPDATE 2020

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

AUTHOR: Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the actions outlined in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's (RCTCBC's) Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) for the period between 2017 and 2020 as approved by the Welsh Government (WG) on the 15th of March 2018. The previous 2019 to 2020 annual update was due to be the last annual update for this WESP, however, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this WESP has been extended to cover the period between 2020 to 2021.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the contents of this report.
- 2.2 Consider and agree the annual update provided within this report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide Cabinet with an update on the actions outlined in RCTCBC's WESP for the extended period between 2020 to 2021.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013¹ placed a duty on all Local Authorities in Wales to consult on, produce and review three year plans that provided the strategic direction for the planning and delivery of Welsh medium and Welsh language education in their locality. Since RCTCBC's 2017 to 2020 WESP was initially prepared and submitted to the WG in 2016, there have been significant changes in the Welsh medium education sector at local

¹ [The School Standards and Organisation \(Wales\) Act 2013](#)

and national levels. Changes have been mainly influenced by WG legislation, in particular the new Welsh in Education Action Plan – 2017 to 2021 and further implementation of the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme². The impact of these changes will not be fully evident in the County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) until well beyond the duration of this WESP. In addition, the WG has updated the regulations regarding WESP's. The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (Wales) Regulations 2019³ and The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020⁴ focus on four key proposals, the principal two being:

- Extending the duration of the WESP from its current three year implementation cycle to a ten year implementation cycle (2022 to 2032).
- Removal of the current duty on Local Authorities to plan their provision of Welsh medium education based on demand with the requirement that Local Authorities achieve targets set by the WG, which aim to increase the percentage of year one learners in Welsh medium education over the duration of the WESP.

- 4.2 RCTCBC welcomes these proposals, but it is mindful that in order to deliver on any agreed targets, various influences must be aligned and external challenges addressed.
- 4.3 Notwithstanding the significant changes in the Welsh medium education sector at local and national levels, along with the complexities of the global Covid-19 pandemic, RCTCBC has continued to support the agreed actions as outlined in its current WESP, with the aim of increasing and improving its Welsh medium education provision and speakers.
- 4.4 Integral to achieving these goals is ensuring there are good schools so all children and young people have equitable access to good English and Welsh medium and Welsh language education. RCTCBC will deliver this by supporting children to have the best start in life and be ready for learning through an improved early years' system and childcare offer and by investing in new and significantly improved 21st Century Schools.
- 4.5 RCTCBC remains committed to ensuring the availability of Welsh medium education, from the initial early years through to primary and secondary education then progressing through to higher and further education, for all learners whatever their learning need in line with achieving the vision of one million people in Wales being Welsh speakers by 2050 as set out in Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers⁵ (Cymraeg 2050).

² [21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme](#)

³ [The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan \(Wales\) Regulations 2019](#)

⁴ [The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans \(Wales\) \(Amendment\) \(Coronavirus\) Regulations 2020](#)

⁵ [Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers](#)

4.6 This is evident in RCTCBC's ambitious Band B 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme, which comprises a range of projects to increase Welsh medium capacity in the County Borough of RCT.

5. CURRENT POSITION

5.1 The WESP includes seven outcomes setting out how Local Authorities are expected to improve Welsh medium and Welsh language education in the locality. The priorities are:

- **Outcome 1:** More seven year old children being taught through the medium of Welsh.
- **Outcome 2:** More learners continuing to improve their language skills on transfer from primary to secondary school.
- **Outcome 3:** More learners aged 14 to 16 studying for qualifications through the medium of Welsh.
- **Outcome 4:** More learners aged 14 to 19 study subjects through the medium of Welsh, in schools, colleges and work based learning.
- **Outcome 5:** More learners with advanced skills in Welsh.
- **Outcome 6:** Welsh medium provision for learners with additional learning needs (ALN).
- **Outcome 7:** Workforce planning and continuing professional development.

STATUTORY SCHOOL AGED LEARNERS WHO ACCESS THEIR EDUCATION THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH ACROSS THE FIVE LOCAL AUTHORITY AREAS THAT COMPRISE THE CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM JOINT EDUCATION SERVICE

5.2 The table that follows outlines the total percentage of statutory school aged learners (aged five to fifteen) who access their learning through Welsh medium primary, middle and secondary schools across each of the five Local Authority areas that comprise the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service (CSC JES) for the previous three academic years and is derived from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC):

Total Percentage of Statutory School Aged Learners who Access their Learning through Welsh Medium Primary, Middle and Secondary Schools			
Local Authority	Total Percentage of Statutory School Aged Learners		
	2018	2019	2020
Bridgend County Borough Council	7.8%	7.5%	7.4%
Cardiff City Council	14.8%	15.0%	15.3%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	7.3%	7.6%	7.72%

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	18.8%	18.0%	18.8%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	12.4%	12.7%	12.8%
CSC JES	13.9%	14.0%	14.2%

5.3 The data demonstrates stability in the total percentage of statutory school aged learners who access their learning through Welsh medium primary, middle and secondary schools across each of the five Local Authority areas that comprise the CSC JES for the previous three academic years.

5.4 RCTCBC has the highest percentage statutory school aged learners who access their learning through Welsh medium primary, middle and secondary schools across each of the five Local Authority areas that comprise the CSC JES for the previous three academic years.

SURPLUS CAPACITY

5.5 Each Local Authority in Wales has a statutory responsibility to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of suitable school places to meet statutory requirements for early years, primary, secondary and post 16 provision for parents/carers that choose to educate their children through the medium of English or Welsh. To meet this requirement, RCTCBC has responsibility for the pupil admissions of English medium schools and Welsh medium schools and funds a number of voluntary aided schools that manage their own admissions.

5.6 The capacities of all school provision is kept under regular, annual review by RCTCBC's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services using data obtained from PLASC, school forecasts, annual admission requests and live birth information from Cwm Taf University Health Board. Any increase in learner populations, particularly within Welsh medium provision, is closely monitored and, if the increase is sustained and clear within the catchment area of a particular school, consideration is given to making the required increase in capacity, by whatever means is most appropriate and most suited to that particular school.

5.7 The majority of the Welsh medium primary schools in the County Borough of RCT currently have surplus places. There is currently 28.1% surplus capacity in Welsh medium primary schools. However, there are a number of primary schools where growth in capacity is needed. As such, action has or is currently being taken to address these issues. For example, RCTCBC:

- Has committed to invest £3.69 million at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar to provide a further 48 places.
- Has brought together the primary and secondary schools to form the new Ysgol Garth Olwg to become a 3 to 19 all through school, to enable the

primary school to expand into the surplus space available in the secondary school.

- Is currently expanding Dolau Primary School as a result of planned housing development in the area – this new provision will provide 540 Welsh medium primary places.
- Is increasing the capacity at Penderyn Primary School to become a Welsh medium only primary school – the capacity of the school will increase in September 2021.
- Committed to invest in building a new Welsh medium primary school in Greater Pontypridd area of RCT on the Heol Y Celyn Primary School site, increasing the number of Welsh medium places available in the area. (It should be noted that at the time the WESP Annual Update was submitted to the WG the decision by the Court of Appeal on this proposal was still pending. However, since this date, the Court of Appeal have subsequently found in favour of RCTCBC on this and the other proposals that were subject to a Judicial Review).

5.8 Furthermore, RCTCBC has also committed to increasing the quality and availability of early years Welsh medium provision co-located on primary school sites by spending £4 million on:

- Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Abercynon – Creation and establishment of a new childcare setting into dedicated premises on the school site to expand identified need in the community.
- Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar – Construction of a four classroom extension to increase capacity, car parking provision and the creation of a dedicated Cylch Meithrin, to expand identified need in the community delivering additional fee paying childcare services for the area.
- Ysgol Llanhari – Location of a modular building on the school site to provide dedicated, suitable premises for Flying Start and fee paying childcare services.
- YGG Evan James – Refurbish and remodel the interior layout to create dedicated, suitable premises for fee paying childcare services
- Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Ynyswen – Location of a modular building on the school site to provide dedicated, suitable premises for fee paying childcare services.
- Ysgol Gynradd Dolau/Dolau Primary School – Creation and establishment of a dedicated childcare facility on the school site to expand identified need in the community.
- Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llantrisant – Location of a modular building on the school site to provide additional capacity for early years and childcare.

5.9 The majority of the Welsh medium secondary schools in the County Borough of RCT have sufficient surplus places. There is currently 23.1% surplus capacity in Welsh medium secondary schools. However, there is one secondary school

where growth in capacity is needed. As such, the following action is currently being taken to address this issue:

- RCTCBC’s 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme has bid for £12.16 million to increase the capacity of Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun from 1,040 learner places to 1,225 learner places. This will be achieved by adding additional teaching accommodation along with a new sports facilities to complement the recently completed 3G sports pitch. These additions will provide state of the art facilities for both Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun and the local community, increasing opportunities for wider participation. It is anticipated that the proposed new teaching accommodation will be completed in readiness for the 2022/2023 academic year.

SPEND ON WELSH MEDIUM EDUCATION IN RECENT YEARS

5.10 RCTCBC continues to deliver and support its long term strategic investment programme of modernisation to create school environments that meet the needs of our communities and provide the best learning provision and outcomes for children and young people in the County Borough of RCT and the wider community. The programme of capital investment is supported with Local Authority funding, WG 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme Band B Capital Grant, WG Reducing Infant Class Sizes Capital Grant, WG Welsh Medium Capital Grant, WG Early Years Capital Grant, WG Childcare Grant, WG Community Hub Grant and Community Infrastructure Levy funding.

5.11 The table that follows outlines the key Welsh medium school projects were included in RCTCBC’s Capital Programme for the previous three years and are included in the overall strategic programme and include a combination of refurbishments, remodelling, demolitions and new buildings:

RCTCBC’s Capital Programme for the Previous Three Years		
RCTCBC’s Capital Programme 2020/2021 to 2022/2021 which was agreed by RCTCBC’s Cabinet on 15th February 2018⁶	RCTCBC’s Capital Programme 2020/2021 to 2022/2021 which was agreed by RCTCBC’s Cabinet on 14th February 2019⁷	RCTCBC’s Capital Programme 2020/2021 to 2022/2021 which was agreed by RCTCBC’s Cabinet on 20th February 2020⁸
Tonyrefail Primary School – Creation of improved accommodation for Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tonyrefail due for		

⁶ [Cabinet Report – 15th February 2018 – The Council’s Capital Programme 2018/2019 to 2020/2021](#)

⁷ [Cabinet Report – 14th February 2019 – The Council’s Capital Programme 2019/2020 to 2021/2022](#)

⁸ [Cabinet Report – 20th February 2020 – The Council’s Capital Programme 2020/2021 to 2022/2023](#)

completion in October 2018.		
Llwyncelyn Infants School and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llwyncelyn – Creation of improved and extended facilities to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llwyncelyn due for completion September 2018.		
	Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Abercynon – Relocation of the existing childcare setting into dedicated premises on the school site.	Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Abercynon – Creation and establishment of a new childcare setting into dedicated premises on the school site to expand identified need in the community.
	Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar – Construction of a four classroom extension to increase capacity to include dedicated, suitable premises for fee paying childcare services.	Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar – Construction of a four classroom extension to increase capacity, car parking provision and the creation of a dedicated Cylch Meithrin, to expand identified need in the community delivering additional fee paying childcare services for the area.
	Ysgol Gynradd Gymunedol Gymraeg Llantrisant – Construct of a two classroom extension to increase capacity at the school.	Ysgol Gynradd Gymunedol Gymraeg Llantrisant – Construction of a two classroom extension to increase capacity at the school.
	Ysgol Llanhari – Location of a modular building on the school site to provide dedicated, suitable premises for Flying Start and fee paying childcare services.	
	YGG Evan James – Refurbish and remodel the interior layout to create dedicated, suitable premises	

	for fee paying childcare services	
	Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Ynyswen – Location of a modular building on the school site to provide dedicated, suitable premises for fee paying childcare services.	
		Ysgol Gynradd Dolau/Dolau Primary School – Creation and establishment of a dedicated childcare facility on the school site to expand identified need in the community.
		Hirwaun Primary School – Construction of a brand new English medium primary school on the existing school site. Increasing the capacity of English medium primary school enabled growth in Penderyn Community Primary School, currently a dual language school, as the school will become Welsh medium primary school only in September 2021. Completion of the project, including all external works, will be summer 2021.

PLANNED MINOR CAPITAL WORKS

- 5.12 The planned minor capital works programme allocation includes an on-going rolling programme for kitchen refurbishments/remodelling, window and door replacements, essential works, electrical rewiring, fire alarm upgrades, toilet refurbishments, Equalities Act/compliance works, access condition surveys, boiler replacement, roof renewal, improvements to schools, asbestos remediation works, schools investment programme and capitalisation of ICT hardware/software and licences.
- 5.13 The table that follows outlines the planned programme capital works spend over the previous three years in Welsh medium primary and secondary schools.

RCTCBC's Planned Programme Capital Works Spend

School	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
Welsh Medium Primary Schools	£569,322.94	£293,626.84	£340,616.38
Welsh Medium Secondary Schools	£1,557,210.69	£897,938.48	£1,057,128.72
Total	£2,126,533.63	£1,191,565.32	£1,397,745.72

OUTCOME 1: MORE SEVEN YEAR OLD CHILDREN BEING TAUGHT THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- 5.14 RCTCBC has seventeen Welsh medium primary schools located throughout the County Borough. There are two all through schools for 3 to 19 year olds: Ysgol Garth Olwg and Ysgol Llanhari, three dual language primary schools for 3 to 11 year olds: Dolau Primary, Heolycelyn Primary and Penderyn Primary Schools and 12 primary schools for 3 to 11 year olds.
- 5.15 The table that follows outlines the total number of primary school aged learners attending schools in RCTCBC, split by English medium and Welsh medium for the previous three academic years and is derived from the PLASC:

Total Number of Primary School Aged Learners Attending Schools in RCTCBC Split by English Medium and Welsh Medium						
Category	Year					
	2017/2018		2018/2019		2019/2020	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total Number of Learners Attending English Medium Primary Schools	18,241	80.9%	18,153	80.9%	18,078	81.0%
Total Number of Learners Attending Welsh Medium Primary Schools	4,291	19.0%	4,269	19.0%	4,220	18.9%
Total Number of Learners Attending Primary Schools	22,532		22,422		22,298	

- 5.16 The data demonstrates stability in the ratio split in primary school aged learners attending English and Welsh medium primary schools in RCTCBC for the previous three academic years.

YEAR TWO LEARNERS

- 5.17 The table that follows outlines the total number of primary school aged learners attending Welsh medium primary schools in RCTCBC, split by year group and

Key Stage for the previous three academic years and is derived from the PLASC:

Total Number of Primary School Aged Learners Attending Welsh Medium Primary Schools in RCTCBC Split by Year Group and Key Stage				
Key Stage	Year Group	Year		
		2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
Foundation Phase	Pre Nursery	73	24	27
	Pre Nursery Part Time	0	19	29
	Nursery	519	421	406
	Nursery Part Time	0	140	130
	Reception	554	517	565
	Reception Part Time	0	1	0
	Year One	530	537	506
	Year Two	543	516	534
Foundation Phase Total		2,219	2,219	2,015
Foundation Phase Part Time Total		0	0	160
Key Stage Two	Year Three	512	533	507
	Year Four	532	499	521
	Year Five	539	528	486
	Year Six	489	534	509
Key Stage Two Total		2,072	2,072	2,094
Primary School Total		4,291	4,269	4,220

5.18 The data demonstrates a decrease in the total number of primary school learners between the academic years 2017/2018 (4,291) to 2018/2019 (4,269) of 22 learners and between the academic years 2018/2019 (4,269) to 2019/2020 (4,220) of 49 learners.

5.19 The data also shows the number of seven year old (Year Two) learners who receive their education through the medium of Welsh. Between the academic years 2017/2018 (543) and 2019/2020 (516), the number of learners decreased by 27 (4.97%). However, between the academic years 2018/2019 (516) and 2019/2020 (534), the number of learners increased by 18 (+3.48%).

5.20 This is below the target set in the 2017 to 2020 WESP of 630 seven year old (Year Two) learners who receive their education through the medium of Welsh for the academic year 2019/2020.

OUTCOME 2: MORE LEARNERS CONTINUING TO IMPROVE THEIR LANGUAGE SKILLS ON TRANSFER FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

5.21 RCTCBC has four Welsh medium secondary schools located throughout the County Borough to ease access. There are two all through schools for 3 to 19 year olds: Ysgol Garth Olwg and Ysgol Llanhari and two secondary schools for 11 to 19 years olds: Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda and Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun. Learners residing in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil also access Welsh medium secondary school education at Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun. All learners who attend these schools study all of their education through the medium of Welsh.

5.22 The table that follows outlines the total number of secondary school aged learners attending schools in RCTCBC, split by English and Welsh medium for the previous three academic years and is derived from the PLASC:

Total Number of Secondary School Aged Learners Attending Schools in RCTCBC Split by English Medium and Welsh Medium						
Category	Year					
	2017/2018		2018/2019		2019/2020	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total Number of Learners Attending English Medium Secondary Schools	12,550	80.7%	12,685	80.6%	12,868	80.4%
Total Number of Learners Attending Welsh Medium Secondary Schools	3,010	19.3%	3,058	19.4%	3,141	19.6%
Total Number of Learners Attending Secondary Schools	15,560		15,743		16,009	

5.23 The data demonstrates stability in the ratio split in secondary school aged learners attending English and Welsh medium secondary schools in RCTCBC for the previous three academic years.

YEAR NINE LEARNERS

5.24 The table that follows outlines the total number of secondary school aged learners attending Welsh medium secondary schools in RCTCBC, split by year group and Key Stage for the previous three academic years and is derived from the PLASC:

Total Number of Secondary School Aged Learners Attending Welsh Medium Secondary Schools in RCTCBC Split by Year Group and Key Stage				
Key Stage	Year Group	Year		
		2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
Key Stage Three	Year Seven	545	577	588
	Year Eight	533	538	554

	Year Nine	504	527	523
Key Stage Three Total		1,582	1,642	1,665
Key Stage Four	Year Ten	491	496	513
	Year Eleven	434	485	489
Key Stage Three Total		925	981	1,002
Key Stage Five/Sixth Form	Year Twelve	300	241	289
	Year Thirteen	203	213	184
	Year Fourteen	0	1	1
Key Stage Five/Sixth Form Total		503	455	474
Secondary School Total		3,010	3,058	3,141

5.25 The data demonstrates an increase in the total number of secondary school learners between the academic years 2017/2018 (3,010) to 2018/2019 (3,058) of 48 learners and between the academic years 2018/2019 (3,058) to 2019/2020 (3,141) of 83 learners.

5.26 The data also shows the number of fourteen year old (Year Nine) learners who receive their education through the medium of Welsh. Between the academic years 2017/2018 (504) and 2018/2019 (527), the number of learners increased by 23 (+4.56%). However, between the academic years 2018/2019 (527) and 2019/2020 (523), the number of learners decreased by 4 (0.75%).

5.27 This is above the target set in the 2017 to 2020 WESP of 520 fourteen year old (Year Nine) learners who receive their education through the medium of Welsh for the academic year 2019/2020.

TRANSITION RATES

5.28 The table that follows shows the transition rates from each Key Stage for the previous three years academic years in RCTCBC and is derived from the PLASC:

Transition From Each Key Stage for the Previous Three Years in RCTCBC			
Transition	Year		
	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020
Foundation Phase to Key Stage Two	97.7%	98.2%	98.3%
Key Stage Two to Key Stage Three	111.7%	113.9%	110.1%
Key Stage Three to Key Stage Four	95.5%	98.4%	97.3%
Key Stag Four to Key Stage Five	62.2%	55.5%	59.6%

5.29 An analysis of transition data indicates that transition of learners between Key Stages does not appear to be a significant problem in RCTCBC.

- 5.30 The growth in learners from Key Stage Two to Key Stage Three (primary school to secondary school transition) is due to out of county learners attending Welsh medium secondary schools in the County Borough of RCT. For example, Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun in the Cynon valley area of RCT is the only Welsh medium secondary school option for learners residing in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil due to there being no Welsh medium secondary school located in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil.

MOVEMENT OF LEARNERS IN WELSH MEDIUM SCHOOLS

- 5.31 On 18th November 2020, a report was presented to RCTCBC's Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee⁹ which outlined the movement of learners in Welsh medium schools in the County Borough of RCT.
- 5.32 The 2020 PLASC suggested that 4,220 primary aged learners in the County Borough of RCT were receiving their education through the medium of Welsh.
- 5.33 During the academic year 2019/2020, 873 primary aged learners moved school within the County Borough of RCT. Of this cohort, 83 learners moved into a Welsh medium school (35 learners moved due to house moves) and 72 learners left a Welsh medium school (24 learners moved due to house moves). This equates to a net increase of 11 learners.
- 5.34 The 2020 PLASC suggested that 3,141 secondary aged learners in the County Borough of RCT were receiving their education through the medium of Welsh.
- 5.35 During the academic year 2019/2020, 213 secondary aged learners moved school within in the County Borough of RCT. Of this cohort, 6 learners moved into a Welsh medium school (4 due to house moves) and 15 learners left (4 due to house moves). This equates to a net reduction of 9 learners.
- 5.36 RCTCBC continues to monitor the numbers of learners attending Welsh medium schools.

OUTCOME 3: MORE LEARNERS AGED 14 TO 16 STUDYING FOR QUALIFICATIONS THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH

- 5.37 Please note that updated data is not provided on Outcome Three as the measures are no longer published by the WG. However, further updates can be seen in Appendix One – Update of Progress – December 2020.

OUTCOME 4: MORE LEARNERS AGED 14 TO 19 STUDY SUBJECTS THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH, IN SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND WORK BASED LEARNING

⁹ [Children and Young People's Scrutiny Report – 18th November 2020 – Movement of Pupils in Welsh Medium Schools](#)

5.38 Please note that updated data is not provided on Outcome Three as the measures are no longer published by the WG. However, further updates can be seen in Appendix One – Update of Progress – December 2020.

OUTCOME 5: MORE LEARNERS WITH ADVANCED SKILLS IN WELSH

5.39 Please note that updated data is not provided on Outcome Three as the measures are no longer published by the WG. However, further updates can be seen in Appendix One – Update of Progress – December 2020.

OUTCOME 6: WELSH MEDIUM PROVISION FOR LEARNERS WITH ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS (ALN)

5.40 Considerable changes are planned in Wales in relation to the statutory provision required to meet the needs of learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Additional Learning Needs (ALN). The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018¹⁰ (The ALNET Act) was introduced in January 2018. The ALNET Act requires Local Authorities to keep the arrangements for supporting learners with SEN and ALN within their locality under review and consider whether these are sufficient. This includes a statutory requirement to take all reasonable steps to create a bilingual system of support for learners with SEN and ALN. The ALNET Act will be supported by new regulations, including secondary legislation and a new statutory ALN Code (The New Code). The Draft ALN Code for Wales – December 2018¹¹ (The Draft Code) is based on the following principles:

- Meeting the needs of learners with SEN and ALN should be part of a whole school approach to school improvement.
- Learners must be supported to participate in mainstream education and in the National Curriculum as fully as possible wherever this is feasible.

5.41 Until the anticipated implementation of The New Code in September 2021, Local Authorities are required to comply with the existing SEN Code of Practice for Wales 2002¹² (The 2002 Code) to fulfil their statutory duties towards children and young people with SEN and ALN.

5.42 In RCTCBC, a total of £3.4 million Additional Needs Funding (ANF) is available to mainstream primary and secondary schools to ensure statutory mainstream provision for learners is robust and to support mainstream inclusion for learners with severe and persistent needs.

5.43 For learners with more significant needs, who experience difficulties with mainstream education, more specialist placements are required. RCTCBC has a range of specialist provisions which includes:

¹⁰ [The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2018](#)

¹¹ [The Draft ALN Code for Wales – December 2018](#)

¹² [SEN Code of Practice for Wales 2002](#)

- 44 Learning Support Classes (LSC's).
 - 2 Pupil Referral Units (PRU's).
 - 4 Special Schools.
- 5.44 Placements within these specialist provisions are agreed by RCTCBC's Access and Inclusion Service Panels.
- 5.45 RCTCBC provides an excellent range of LSC provisions attached to mainstream primary and secondary schools. However, in light of the requirements of The ALNET Act, concerns regarding rising exclusions and an increase in requests for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) placements, a report was presented to RCTCBC's Cabinet on 17th December 2019¹³ where it was recommended to enhance the current LSC provision to address the aforementioned issues. Additionally, schools are reporting increasing levels of learners with mental health and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in mainstream contexts.
- 5.46 An analysis of data within the report (Cabinet – 17th December 2019) confirmed that:
- There is currently insufficient SEBD provision in the secondary sector.
 - There is currently no discreet specialist provision for Welsh medium learners with significant ALN.
- 5.47 RCTCBC currently spends in the region of £4.1 million annually on the provision of LSC's. There are currently approximately 362 learners accessing the 44 LSC provisions within the County Borough of RCT.
- 5.48 Currently Welsh medium learners with significant SEN and ALN who would meet the criteria for LSC provision are supported by a specialist peripatetic team – The Welsh Complex Needs Team. The Welsh Complex Needs Team, which includes a Welsh medium specialist teacher and two Learning Support Assistants, provides support through an inclusive delivery model whereby learners are provided with specialist support within their mainstream settings.
- 5.49 During the academic year 2019/2020, The Welsh Complex Needs Team supported 14 learners with an age range between eight (Year Three) and fourteen (Year Nine) of which:
- Eight attended Key Stage Two.
 - Six attended Key Stage Three.

¹³ [Cabinet Report – 17th December 2019 – Review of Learning Support Class Provision for Learners with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties \(SEBD\) Significant Additional Learning Needs \(ALN\)](#)

- 5.50 Data analysis suggests that learners accessing support from The Welsh Complex Needs Team are making progress that is comparable to that of their peers in English medium LSC's. An evaluation of the provision was undertaken in the Autumn Term of 2019 and showed that this inclusive model adopted in Welsh medium settings has been very positive.
- 5.51 In response to the aforementioned data analysis contained within the report (Cabinet – 17th December 2019), RCTCBC's Cabinet approved proposals for change and sought to:
- Enhance the continuum of provision that effectively addresses the need for specialist SEBD provision within Key Stage Three and Key Stage Four.
 - Create a specialist LSC provision for Welsh medium Key Stage Three and Key Stage Four learners with significant SEN and ALN.
 - The commencement of a consultation on proposals to enhance LSC provision for Welsh medium Key Stage Three and Key Stage Four learners with SEBD by establishing a LSC at Ysgol Garth Olwg.
- 5.52 Due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the proposals to enhance LSC provision for Welsh medium Key Stage Three and Key Stage Four learners with SEBD by establishing a LSC at Ysgol Garth Olwg were lapsed and, as such, on 25th June 2020, RCTCBC's Cabinet¹⁴ agreed to progress with an amended proposal to extend an earlier pilot to fund mainstream secondary schools to establish their own alternative curriculum for learners with significant SEBD. As a result, in September 2020, funding was provided to Ysgol Garth Olwg to establish an in house, school based alternative provision that ensures learners presenting with SEBD can have their needs met within their local Welsh medium mainstream school.

OUTCOME 7: WORKFORCE PLANNING AND CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Welsh Language Commissioner's Briefing Note: The Welsh Language and the Statutory Education Workforce in Wales¹⁵ published in August 2020, outlined the importance of ensuring sufficient numbers of Welsh medium teachers in reaching the vision of one million people in Wales being Welsh speakers by 2050 as set out in Cymraeg 2050. As such, the briefing note outlines a number of recommendations.

- 5.53 In order to create more Welsh speakers, our education system is dependent on its workforce and we must work to ensure we create a workforce with robust linguistic skills, able to inspire and motivate learners in Welsh medium

¹⁴ Cabinet Report – 25th June 2020 – Review of Learning Support Class Provision for Learners with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) Significant Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

¹⁵ Welsh Language Commissioner – Briefing Note – The Welsh Language and the Statutory Education Workforce in Wales – 6th August 2020

education. In the year 2020, RCTCBC employed 12,457 people, of which 5,290 (42.4%) were school based staff. The data in the table that follows illustrates the number and percentage of staff who identified themselves as fluent or fairly fluent in Welsh and was correct as at 17th August 2020:

Number of Staff who Identify Themselves as Fluent or Fairly Fluent in Welsh							
Number of Employees with Welsh Language Skills		Fluent (Welsh Language Level Four and Five)		Fairly Fluent (Welsh Language Level Three)		Total (Welsh Language Level Three, Four and Five)	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Category	Total Number of Staff						
All Staff	12,457	1,317	10.5%	318	2.5%	1,635	13.1%
School Based Staff	5,290	742	14.0%	175	3.3%	917	17.3%
Non-School Based Staff	7,167	575	8.0%	143	1.9%	718	10.0%

5.54 The table demonstrates that 1,635 (13.1%) of school based staff have fluent or fairly fluent Welsh language skills (Welsh Language Levels Three, Four and Five).

5.55 RCTCBC has demonstrated its commitment to Welsh medium education workforce planning for schools in the County Borough of RCT by working in collaboration with other Local Authorities and the CSC JES. In continuing this commitment, RCTCBC and the CSC JES will continue to:

- Provide clear leadership progression opportunities for the Welsh medium sector through leadership development programmes at various levels including the Aspiring Headteacher Programme with subsequent NPQH assessment.
- Provide Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) with Welsh language skills courses at different levels.
- Continue to develop and support secondary school teachers who are not subject specialists.
- Provide Welsh language skills courses at different levels for school learning support workers.
- Provide school learning support workers who have attended the Welsh Language Sabbatical with continued professional learning, networking and opportunities to share of best practice.
- Provide continued professional learning to support learning support workers in the Welsh medium sector in order to meet identified needs.

- Provide Welsh Language Sabbatical Scheme participants with continued professional learning, networking and opportunities to share best practice within and across schools.
- Ensure that professional learning opportunities are in place to take account of the language progression of staff.
- Ensure that the CSC JES Welsh in Education Officers supports school leaders to accurately complete the Welsh language element of the School Workforce Census.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

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

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 There are no consultation implications aligned to this report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The following legislation is aligned to this report:

- The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013¹⁶.
- Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (Wales) Regulations 2019¹⁷.
- The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020¹⁸.

10. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

- 10.1 There are links to RCTCBC's Corporate Plan for the period between 2020 to 2024, specifically the priority:

- Prosperity – Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper.
 - Ensuring we have good schools so all children have access to a great education.

¹⁶ [The School Standards and Organisation \(Wales\) Act 2013](#)

¹⁷ [Welsh in Education Strategic Plan \(Wales\) Regulations 2019](#)

¹⁸ [The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans \(Wales\) \(Amendment\) \(Coronavirus\) Regulations 2020](#)

- 10.2 The delivery of the WESP will contribute to all seven well-being goals within the Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015 and due regard has been made to the Five Ways of Working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

11. **CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 RCTCBC has the highest percentage statutory school aged learners who access their learning through Welsh medium primary, middle and secondary schools across each of the five Local Authority areas that comprise the CSC JES for the previous three academic years.
- 11.2 The majority of the Welsh medium primary and secondary schools in the County Borough of RCT currently have surplus places. However, there are a number of primary and secondary schools where growth in capacity is needed. As such, action has or is currently being taken to address these issues.
- 11.3 Furthermore, RCTCBC has also committed to increasing the quality and availability of early years Welsh medium provision co-located on primary school sites by spending £4 million on a number of projects.
- 11.4 Data demonstrates stability in the ratio split in primary school aged learners attending English and Welsh medium primary schools in RCTCBC for the previous three academic years. The data also shows the number of seven year old (Year Two) learners who receive their education through the medium of Welsh. Between the academic years 2017/2018 (543) and 2019/2020 (516), the number of learners decreased by 27 (4.97%). However, between the academic years 2018/2019 (516) and 2019/2020 (534), the number of learners increased by 18 (+3.48%). This is below the target set in the 2017 to 2020 WESP of 630 seven year old (Year Two) learners who receive their education through the medium of Welsh for the academic year 2019/2020.
- 11.5 Similarly, data demonstrates stability in the ratio split in secondary school aged learners attending English and Welsh medium secondary schools in RCTCBC for the previous three academic years. The data also shows the number of fourteen year old (Year Nine) learners who receive their education through the medium of Welsh. Between the academic years 2017/2018 (504) and 2018/2019 (527), the number of learners increased by 23 (+4.56%). However, between the academic years 2018/2019 (527) and 2019/2020 (523), the number of learners decreased by 4 (0.75%). This is above the target set in the 2017 to 2020 WESP of 520 fourteen year old (Year Nine) learners who receive their education through the medium of Welsh for the academic year 2019/2020.
- 11.6 Alongside this, an analysis of transition data indicates that transition of learners between Key Stages does not appear to be a significant problem in RCTCBC.
- 11.7 During the academic year 2019/2020, 873 primary aged learners moved school within the County Borough of RCT. Of this cohort, 83 learners moved into a



Welsh medium school (35 learners moved due to house moves) and 72 learners left a Welsh medium school (24 learners moved due to house moves). This equates to a net increase of 11 learners.

- 11.8 Similarly, during the academic year 2019/2020, 213 secondary aged learners moved school within in the County Borough of RCT. Of this cohort, 6 learners moved into a Welsh medium school (4 due to house moves) and 15 learners left (4 due to house moves). This equates to a net reduction of 9 learners.
- 11.9 RCTCBC continues to monitor the numbers of learners attending Welsh medium schools.
- 11.10 During the academic year 2019/2020, The Welsh Complex Needs Team supported 14 learners with an age range between eight (Year Three) and fourteen (Year Nine) of which:
- Eight attended Key Stage Two.
 - Six attended Key Stage Three.
- 11.11 Data analysis suggests that learners accessing support from The Welsh Complex Needs Team are making progress that is comparable to that of their peers in English medium LSC's. An evaluation of the provision was undertaken in the Autumn Term of 2019 and showed that this inclusive model adopted in Welsh medium settings has been very positive.
- 11.12 In September 2020, funding was provided to Ysgol Garth Olwg to establish an in house, school based alternative provision that ensures learners presenting with SEBD can have their needs meet within their local Welsh medium mainstream school.
- 11.13 In order to create more Welsh speakers, our education system is dependent on its workforce and we must ensure we create a workforce with robust linguistic skills, able to inspire and motivate learners in Welsh medium and Welsh language education. RCTCBC recognises that our education system is dependent on its workforce and we must work to ensure we create a workforce with robust linguistic skills, able to inspire and motivate learners in Welsh medium education. RCTCBC is committed to Welsh medium and Welsh language education workforce planning for schools in the County Borough of RCT, and has and will continue to work in collaboration with other Local Authorities and the CSC JES in order to create more Welsh speakers.
- 11.14 Looking ahead to the new WESP, which will be consulted upon later this year, in addition to the initiatives, actions, and commitments that will be included to facilitate and support the growth of the Welsh language, there are a number of 21st Century Schools projects that will be delivered in tandem to support the agreed outcomes. These projects include, but are not limited to, constructing a new school for YGG Llyn Y Forwyn, and continuing to work on the feasibility to



provide a new school for YG Cwm Rhondda. Both of these projects were included within the 'Planning for Welsh Medium School Places' report brought before Cabinet in April 2019, and both of these projects continue to be progressed.

- 11.15 RCTCBC remains committed to ensuring the availability of Welsh medium education, from the initial early years through to primary and secondary education then progressing through to higher and further education, for all learners whatever their learning need in line with achieving the vision of one million people in Wales being Welsh speakers by 2050 as set out in Cymraeg 2050.



Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan – 2017 to 2020

Appendix One – Update of Progress – December 2020

School Organisation				
Success Criteria	Milestones/Sub Actions	Progress 2018	Progress 2019	Progress 2020
<p>Outcome 1:</p> <p>More seven year old learners being taught through the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>Achieve target of 21.0% (550) in the academic year 2016/2017 and achieve target of 23.0% (560) in the academic year 2017/2018.</p> <p>Outcome 2:</p> <p>More learners continuing to improve their language skills on transfer from primary to secondary school.</p>	<p>New and improved school buildings with appropriate capacity levels to fully meet forecasted demand for Welsh medium provision in their catchment areas.</p>	<p>A report was presented to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's (RCTCBC's) Cabinet on the 20th September 2018 with proposals to enhance Welsh medium provision in the Cynon Valley, Pontypridd area and Taff Ely.</p>	<p>Cabinet approval for the proposal was granted in July 2019.</p> <p>This project will increase the Welsh medium numbers in the Pontypridd area of Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) by 93 places and provide learners with facilities that are fit for the 21st Century.</p> <p>The first stage of the Business Case funding procedure has been submitted to the Welsh Government (WG).</p>	<p>These proposals are currently subject to a legal challenge. A further update on this in due course.</p>
	<p>Extend school buildings to meet forecasted demand for Welsh medium provision in their catchment area.</p>	<p>A report was presented to RCTCBC's Cabinet on 20th September 2018 to obtain approval to commence</p>	<p>Design work on both projects is underway. The first stage of the funding application</p>	<p>21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme funding via the WG has been secured for Ysgol</p>

<p>Page 81</p>		<p>projects to extend Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar and Ysgol Gymraeg Rhydywaun.</p>	<p>process has been approved by the WG.</p>	<p>Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar which will see the existing school benefit from a four classroom extension incorporating a new on site Cylch Meithrin providing an extra 48 learner places. A contractor will be appointed before the new year and works are expected to commence in the spring of 2021.</p> <p>The Outline Business Case for Ysgol Gymraeg Rhydywaun has been approved by the WG. This project will increase the capacity of the school by 192 learner places. A contractor has been appointed and the detailed designs are nearing completion. RCTCBC are working towards submitting a Full Business Case to the WG in the New Year with an anticipated construction start date of April 2021.</p>
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				Progress of both projects are currently on programme.
	Revisions to catchment areas of some Welsh medium primary schools, to better align supply and demand for Welsh medium school places (to utilise spare capacity that currently exists). As at January 2017, there were a total of 550 spare learner places across all Welsh medium primary schools and 1,146 spare learner places in all Welsh medium secondary schools in RCT. The WG guidance states that we must first utilise spare capacity that exists within a reasonable distance before any new provision can be made.	A report was presented to the RCTCBC's Cabinet on 20 th September 2018 to obtain approval to commence consultation on proposals which include making Penderyn Primary School a full Welsh medium primary school, with alterations to its catchment area.	<p>Cabinet approval for these proposals was granted in April 2019.</p> <p>WG funding was secured and works to build the new English medium school are underway. This will allow the English medium learners to relocate.</p> <p>The project programme is on target to make Penderyn Community Primary School a Welsh only primary school by September 2021.</p>	<p>Excellent progress has been made and the new school building in Hirwaun has been completed.</p> <p>Following completion of the externals it is expected that this school site will be fully complete by the summer of 2021 to allow the English medium learners currently attending Penderyn Community Primary to relocate in September 2021.</p> <p>Penderyn Community Primary will become Welsh medium in September 2021 and as consulted upon, will have an increased catchment area.</p>
	Consider making dual language primary schools into full Welsh medium primary schools.	Work is progressing under Band B of RCTCBC's 21 st Century Schools and Colleges Programme.	As reported above, the project programme is on target to make Penderyn Community Primary School a Welsh medium only	Information on Penderyn Community Primary school is above.

		<p>In addition, a report was presented to RCTCBC's Cabinet on the 20th September 2018 to consider a proposal in the south of the County Borough and to enhance available capacity at Dolau Primary School (dual language school).</p> <p>RCTCBC will continue to work to secure appropriate funding to deliver full Welsh medium schools removing dual language status.</p> <p>Proposals are also under consideration to amend the language category of Penderyn Community Primary School from its current dual language status to a 3 to 11 Welsh medium community primary school with a capacity of 231 learners (plus nursery) all of which will be Welsh medium provision.</p>	<p>primary school by September 2021.</p> <p>RCTCBC's Cabinet approval to extend Dolau Primary School with the longer term goal to create two separate Welsh medium and English medium provisions was granted in April 2019. Thus doubling the Welsh medium learner provision.</p> <p>Planning for this extension has been submitted and RCTCBC will continue to work with its delivery partners to deliver this project as soon as possible.</p>	<p>Officers from RCTCBC are in the process of finalising the design of this new extension for Dolau Primary School with the housing developer Persimmon. Panning consent is due to be submitted to RCTCBC's Planning department imminently.</p> <p>As is mentioned above, as well as the plans to make Penderyn Primary School and Dolau Primary School Welsh Medium primary provisions, RCTCBC recently consulted upon opening a new Welsh medium primary school in Pontypridd as part of wider school organisation proposals. These proposals are currently subject to a legal challenge and so we will provide a further update on this in due course.</p>
	<p>Relocation of pre-school provision, such as Cylch</p>	<p>This model of co-location of community facilities on</p>	<p>The Welsh Medium Capital Grant bid was successful</p>	<p>A new childcare facility at Ysgol Llanhari opened in</p>

<p>Meithrin, to school sites whenever opportunities arise.</p> <p>This has recently been successfully achieved, with the relocation of Cylchoedd Meithrin from community venues to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tonyrefail and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llwynceilyn.</p> <p>Co-location of this kind of provision on school sites will greatly assist the process of transition into statutory schooling.</p>	<p>school sites will also be considered as part of RCTCBC's Band B 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme.</p> <p>In addition, Business Cases have been submitted to the WG for funding to provide additional provision in areas where demand has been recognised by the Child Care Sufficiency Assessment.</p> <p>RCTCBC has been successful in securing £3.5 million of Welsh Medium Capital Grant funding for six projects aimed at enhancing pre-school provision on various school sites in the County Borough of RCT.</p> <p>A bid has also been submitted to access the Childcare Offer Capital Grant. This includes bids to enhance Welsh medium wrap-around care for</p>	<p>and six projects have had funding approved, the projects are progressing well.</p> <p>In addition, the Childcare Offer Capital Grant bid was successful. Work to enhance the Welsh medium wrap-around provision at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Evan James is complete. An improved and extended Meithrin and wrap around provision at Ysgol Gymraeg Llanhari will be open in January 2020.</p> <p>Design development is ongoing on the other projects.</p>	<p>January 2020. This increased capacity from 19 Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) registered places to 69. The provider has also been able to extend the facility to include after school and holiday care, as well as full day care for children under two years of age.</p> <p>A new childcare facility next to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Ynyswen opened in September 2020. This has increased CIW registered places from 24 to 30. The provider plans to extend their facility to offer an afternoon session and holiday care, thus increasing the number of Welsh medium places available further.</p> <p>Plans are progressing for new Welsh medium childcare facilities on the sites of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Abercynon, Ysgol</p>
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		<p>nursery aged children in three settings.</p>		<p>Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar and Dolau Primary School. It is hoped the new facilities at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Abercynon and Dolau Primary School will be completed by September 2021, with the facility at Ysgol Gymraeg Aberdar being completed by September 2022.</p> <p>All projects will greatly assist the process of transition into statutory schooling and ensure a language continuum for children.</p>
	<p>Appropriate business cases prepared with evidence to support bids for monies to provide additional school capacity from housing developers where opportunities arise.</p>	<p>A report was presented to RCTCBC's Cabinet on 20th September 2018 to obtain approval to commence consultation on a proposal to create a new school provision, with 540 places in total for the new Llanilid housing development in Llanharan. This consultation phase will end on 31st December 2018.</p>	<p>Cabinet approval to extend Dolau Primary School with the longer term goal to create two separate Welsh medium and English medium provisions was granted in April 2019. Thus doubling the Welsh medium learner provision.</p> <p>Planning for this extension has been submitted and RCTCBC will continue to</p>	<p>An update on this project is above.</p> <p>This work is continuous and is undertaken as part of RCTCBC's statutory school planning duties. Education Officers work closely with Planning Officers to ensure that the increase for demand for Welsh medium education that arises from housing developments are</p>

<p>Page 86</p>		<p>This provision will open, in the first instance, as an extension to Dolau Primary School, which is a dual language primary school. This will enable the new provision to be established as part of a recognised, successful school and will also give parents/carers purchasing homes on the development the option of choosing a Welsh medium education for their children.</p>	<p>work with its delivery partners to deliver this project as soon as possible.</p> <p>In May 2019 a report was presented to RCTCBC's Cabinet which outlined plans to provide a new Welsh medium primary school for the Taf Ely area should a number of housing development sites come to fruition. This will be developed in more detail should planning consent be secured. We will continue to work with the land owners to ensure that the educational needs of Welsh medium learners are met.</p>	<p>appropriately managed and financial interventions are covered under the developers planning obligations.</p> <p>Funding opportunities are being constantly reviewed as part of the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme to support and enhance financial contributions from housing developers.</p> <p>This work is ongoing.</p>
	<p>Increase the number of parents/carers choosing Welsh medium provision for their children by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing annual training for front-line staff on the benefits of being bilingual 	<p>'Being Bilingual' booklet is circulated within all Flying Start commissioned and RCTCBC childcare settings for staff to share with parents/carers. This to be part of an awareness raising campaign.</p>	<p>Rhondda South Delivery area, delivered awareness session for parents in Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llwyncelyn.</p> <p>Twenty Flying Start practitioners have completed 'Croesi'r Bont' Courses.</p>	<p>Flying Start and Children and Family Centres distribute over 200 'Being Bilingual' booklets annually.</p> <p>The eight Flying Start commissioned providers (bilingual) accessed the Clebran workshop</p>

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 87</p>	<p>and positive messaging for parents/carers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building on the 'Being Bilingual' booklet, to promote the advantages of Welsh medium education and the benefits of bilingualism. <p>Improve language progression from Flying Start settings to Welsh medium primary education to 90.0% by 2021 by providing training and fostering closer links between provisions and neighbouring Welsh medium primary schools.</p> <p>Increasing opportunities for parents/carers to choose Welsh medium education for their children by increasing the number of Flying Start Welsh medium places.</p>	<p>Commissioned Welsh medium Flying Start childcare places have increased over the last 18 months and continue to grow through the approved supplier scheme. Flying Start Welsh medium childcare places are now 25.0% of the commissioned placements.</p>	<p>Twelve Flying Start practitioners have enrolled to start training from September 2019 in Open Learning Welsh and Cymraeg Babi courses at the University of South Wales.</p> <p>Mudiad Meithrin have delivered Croesi'r Bont course within Ynishir and Wattstown setting.</p>	<p>delivered by Mudiad Meithrin.</p>
	<p>Increase use of Welsh language in service delivery</p>	<p>Funding secured to provide Welsh language training in the Autumn Term. Intend to</p>	<p>Flying Start and Children and Family Centres</p>	<p>Flying Start and Children and Family Centres</p>

	<p>Flying Start:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include the 'Being Bilingual' booklet in Flying Start birth registration packs. <p>Childcare:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase childcare practitioner use and promotion of the Welsh language within all Flying Start commissioned child care settings through training and bespoke packages. • Use Flying Start Childcare Observational Assessment Monitoring Tool to gain baseline of Welsh medium provision. (Baseline 71.0% on use and promotion of Welsh language – aim for 10.0% increase). <p>Parent and Family Support:</p>	<p>extend to commissioned Flying Start childcare settings.</p> <p>Re-administration of assessment suggests increase of 7.0% to 78.0%.</p>	<p>distribute over 200 'Being Bilingual' booklets annually.</p> <p>Percentage of Flying Start places delivered through the medium of Welsh increased from 12.0% in 2016/2017 to 24.0% in 2018/2019.</p> <p>Six Flying Start settings – 36 practitioners, have undertaken the relevant training provided by our in-house Welsh language tutor over a six week period.</p>	<p>distribute over 200 'Being Bilingual' booklets annually.</p> <p>The percentage of Flying Start places delivered through the medium of Welsh has increased from 12.0% in 2016/2017 to 24.0% in 2019/2020. This is a 100.0% increase between 2016/2017 and 2019/2020.</p> <p>The eight Flying Start commissioned providers (bilingual) accessed the Clebran workshop delivered by Mudiad Meithrin.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include Welsh language awareness and taster sessions as part of parent/carer workshops. 			
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 89</p>	<p>Talk and Play:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase use of basic Welsh phrases in Talk and Play Playgroups. • Increase use of Welsh reading books and songs. • Explore use of Welsh version of the 'WellComm' Assessment. <p>Children's Centres:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage Welsh language course providers to deliver from Children's Centres. • Deliver themed family open days and Welsh language taster sessions. <p>Increase number of Welsh</p>	<p>Enhanced use and introduction of phrase of the week. Bilingual story books now used and these are loaned to parents/carers. Weekly singing of Welsh songs and nursery rhymes. Assessment offered in Welsh but literature is not in Welsh</p> <p>Free usage of facilities provided to encourage course delivery. Taster sessions held and included clog dancing, silent Welsh disco, Welsh for beginners. 200 attendees over three days. In addition, Welsh themed singing and dancing Teddy Bears Picnic (3,500 in attendance).</p>	<p>Welsh Language Services have provided RCTCBC's Communications and Public Relations Team with a number of resources and content to promote via our social media channels, including the Welsh Government's Cymraeg i Blant videos.</p>	<p>The percentage of Flying Start places delivered through the medium of Welsh has increased from 12.0% in 2016/2017 to 24.0% in 2019/2020. This is a 100.0% increase between 2016/2017 and 2019/2020.</p> <p>As the nearest commissioned Welsh medium Flying Start provider may be some distance from a family, Welsh medium approved suppliers (spot purchasers) are used to provide Welsh medium nursery provision to families in their locality. This process is being reviewed in preparation for the next round of tendering of Flying Start places, to ensure a more proactive offer of</p>



	<p>medium Flying Start placements by 10.0% (total 25.0% Welsh medium placements).</p> <p>Increase spot purchasing of childcare contracts to include an additional three Welsh medium providers.</p>	<p>25.0% of Flying Start placements are now Welsh medium.</p>		<p>Welsh medium nursery places.</p>
Youth Engagement and Participation Service and Partners				
<p>Outcome 3:</p> <p>More 14 to 16 year old learners studying qualifications through the Welsh medium.</p> <p>Outcome 4:</p> <p>More 16 to 19 year old learners studying through the Welsh medium in schools, colleges or work based learning.</p>	<p>Research and create an information tool for young people stating the benefits and options of Welsh medium further education and employment. This will need to be produced with young people.</p> <p>Complete a summary report evidencing the research findings highlighting the appropriate tool to use to share this information with young people.</p> <p>Promote the information tool to young people.</p>	<p>Following further research it was clear there are not enough Welsh medium further education opportunities to create a tool.</p> <p>Menter Iaith are now researching the creation of a video promoting the Welsh language.</p> <p>Information tool will not be viable.</p>	<p>Menter Iaith are unable to progress the information tool due to lack of Welsh language further education opportunities.</p> <p>Menter Iaith have not been able to complete the promotion video.</p>	<p>Menter Iaith are unable to progress the information tool due to lack of Welsh language further education opportunities.</p> <p>Menter Iaith have not been able to complete the promotion video. The Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS) have supported Careers Wales in creating an educational video for learners at Welsh and English medium secondary schools to promote the career benefits of bilingualism.</p>

	<p>Identify partners/organisations that could deliver bespoke language awareness sessions for young people highlighting the value of having Welsh language as a skill.</p>	<p>Menter Iaith and the Urdd have completed these sessions.</p> <p>The Urdd delivered raising awareness sessions to 350 young people at Tonypany Community College, Aberdare Community School and Mountain Ash Comprehensive School.</p>	<p>The Urdd have delivered raising awareness sessions at the following schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St John's the Baptist Church in Wales High. • Mountain Ash Comprehensive School. • Aberdare Community School. • Ysgol Nant Gwyn. • Pontypridd High. • Treorchy Comprehensive. 	<p>Youth Workers from the Urdd have been furloughed due to the current Covid-19 restrictions, therefore raising awareness sessions have not taken place.</p>
	<p>Coordinate and monitor the delivery of these sessions in schools/colleges and community settings.</p>	<p>Aberdare Community School, Mountain Ash Comprehensive School, Pontypridd High and Ysgol Nant Gwyn have been successful with their application for 2019.</p>	<p>The Urdd have delivered raising awareness sessions at the following schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St John's the Baptist Church in Wales High. • Mountain Ash Comprehensive School. • Aberdare Community School. • Ysgol Nant Gwyn. • Pontypridd High. • Treorchy Comprehensive. 	<p>Youth Workers from the Urdd have been furloughed due to the current Covid-19 restrictions, therefore raising awareness sessions have not taken place.</p>

Page 92	<p>Evaluate the effectiveness of these sessions through questionnaires/surveys and generate a report.</p>	<p>Applications for 2019 will be sent to RCTCBC's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services Senior Management Team and Welsh departments in schools.</p>	<p>Sessions are still on-going, but will be evaluated when finished.</p>	<p>Youth Workers from Urdd have been furloughed due to the current Covid-19 restrictions, therefore raising awareness sessions have not taken place.</p>
	<p>Coordinate a timetable of events to target Sixth Form and college learners to meet and use the Welsh language by providing social opportunities for them.</p>	<p>Menter Iaith and the Urdd offer provision for post-16 young people by organising concerts and other events including senior Youth Clubs at Treorchy Comprehensive and Pontypridd High for 30+ young people.</p> <p>Menter Iaith support Welsh speaking young people to present a weekly radio show on GTFM every Sunday (with over 1,000 listeners).</p> <p>The Urdd offer Sixth Form learners volunteering opportunities at various events including sports competitions and residential weekends.</p>	<p>The Urdd and Menter Iaith hold Youth Forums at Ysgol Llanhari, Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun and Ysgol Garth Olwg. These Youth Forums arrange social opportunities for young people to have further opportunities to socialise through the Welsh language.</p> <p>The Urdd have 70 Volunteers aged between 16 and 25 who support and promote Welsh language provision.</p>	<p>The Youth Forums at all four Welsh medium secondary schools did not meet between March and September due to the Covid-19 restrictions.</p> <p>Menter Iaith are promoting the Youth Forums with the YEPS support at all four Welsh medium secondary schools, to the new cohort of Year Twelve learners.</p>

<p>Promote the events.</p> <p>Record the number of young people attending and evaluate through questionnaires and surveys.</p>	<p>Events promoted through the schools/colleges, Wicid website, the YEPS and social media:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menter Iaith – 25+ young people. • Urdd – 40+ young people. • The YEPS – Volunteering opportunities only offered from September 2018. 	<p>Events promoted through the schools/colleges, Wicid website, the YEPS and social media:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urdd – 70 volunteers. • The YEPS – 6 volunteers. 	<p>Physical activities have not been arranged due to the current Covid-19 restrictions.</p> <p>The YEPS have developed a partnership to make Welsh medium music and drama more accessible to young people in the County Borough of RCT, young performers from across Wales are promoted through the WICID website.</p>
<p>Deliver 'Cymraeg Bob Dydd' to encourage young people studying Welsh as a second language to take on further study to encourage the use of the language outside of school.</p> <p>Record the number of young people attending and evaluate through questionnaires and surveys.</p>	<p>The Urdd delivered awareness raising sessions to 350 young people at Tonypany Community College, Aberdare Community School and Mountain Ash Comprehensive School.</p> <p>The secondary schools have liaised with the Urdd Youth Worker on utilising the offer of £500 to promote the Welsh language, e.g. Tafwyl, Eisteddfod and bringing in external tutors to promote cultural activities.</p>	<p>The Urdd have delivered language awareness raising sessions at the following schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St John's the Baptist Church in Wales High. • Mountain Ash Comprehensive School. • Aberdare Community School. • Ysgol Nant Gwyn. • Pontypridd High. • Treorchy Comprehensive. 	<p>Youth Workers from Urdd have been furloughed due to the current Covid-19 restrictions, therefore language awareness sessions have not taken place.</p> <p>The YEPS have supported Career Wales in creating an educational video for learners at Welsh and English medium secondary schools to promote the career benefits of bilingualism.</p>

		<p>Applications for 2018/2019 will be sent to RCTCBC's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services Senior Management Team and Welsh departments in schools.</p>		
<p>Page 94</p>	<p>Deliver social Welsh medium events and activities for young people including residential opportunities, eisteddfodau, sport and accreditation.</p>	<p>The YEPS Welsh medium after school clubs offered at all four Welsh medium secondary schools during term times.</p> <p>Summer holiday activities offered through the medium of Welsh for both Welsh and English medium schools, included gorge walking, rafting and team building. In total, 241 activities were offered through the medium of Welsh, with 269 participants and 41.0% of these were identified as being vulnerable young people.</p> <p>Accredited courses (Work Related Education and PSE)</p>	<p>The Urdd have 350 members between 16 and 25. These members participate in a range of activities including sport and culture, residential trips and accredited learning.</p> <p>The YEPS Welsh medium after school clubs offered at all four Welsh medium secondary schools during term times.</p> <p>Summer holiday activities offered through the medium of Welsh for both Welsh and English medium schools, included gorge walking, rafting and team building. In total, 666 sessions were offered through the medium</p>	<p>Prior to Covid-19 restrictions on average 40 young people, attend a weekly open access Youth Club on at Garth Olwg Youth Centre these young people have been offered the opportunity to engage in virtual provision due to the current Covid-19 restrictions.</p> <p>After school activities and holiday provision is offered for the learner's at all four Welsh medium secondary schools.</p> <p>Meter laith support young people to deliver weekly Welsh language radio sessions.</p>

		<p>were delivered to 45 young people at three Welsh medium secondary schools.</p>	<p>of Welsh, with over 1000 participants and 44.0% of these were identified as vulnerable young people.</p>	<p>Menter laith plan, film and edit videos for young people through the medium of Welsh.</p>
	<p>Map out the current provision offered by Local Authorities and community organisations through the medium of Welsh, identifying gaps and highlight areas of need.</p> <p>Ensure that the provision that is offered is advertised on Dewis.</p>	<p>A Working Group share information on current provision and have identified evening provision and post-16 provision as significant gaps. The YEPS now offer a Welsh medium Youth Club at Ysgol Garth Olwg with 25+ attending and at Penderyn with 15+ attending. The Urdd, Menter laith and the YEPS offer evening provision at Talbot Green. These clubs are also open to Welsh learners.</p> <p>Menter laith and the Urdd offer post 16 provision at Treorchy and Pontypridd following the mapping exercise.</p> <p>The YEPS have updated information on Dewis and the Wicid website. The Working Group have</p>	<p>The YEPS now offer Welsh medium Youth Clubs at Garth Olwg with 35+ attending and Penderyn with 15+ attending. The club at Talbot Green was not well attended and therefore did not continue.</p> <p>The Urdd and Menter laith hold Youth Forums at Llanahri, Rhydywaun and Garth Olwg. These Youth Forums arrange social opportunities for young people to have further opportunities to socialise through the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>The Urdd have 70 Volunteers aged between 16 and 25 who support.</p> <p>Information is shared by partners at the Youth</p>	<p>Due to current Covid-19 restrictions all provision is now virtual.</p> <p>Provision is promoted through Wicid website and the YEPS and Menter laith social media platforms.</p>



		identified that promoting the provisions to young people would also be effective using social media, therefore Twitter, Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram have been utilised.	Support Services Strategy Working Group, to ensure a comprehensive provision is offered to young people and a sufficient opportunity to participate through the Welsh language is provided. This will be promoted on the YEPS website and social media platforms.	
	Establish links with the RCTCBC Youth Forum and other Youth Forums regarding the promotion of Welsh language provision.	Menter Iaith support Youth Forums at all four Welsh medium secondary schools. Individuals from these Youth Forums attend the YEPS Youth Forum that is held quarterly.	Menter Iaith support Youth Forums at all four Welsh medium secondary schools. The young people from these Youth Forums organise provision for other learners to socialise through the medium of Welsh.	The Youth Forums did not meet between March and September this year due to Covid-19 restrictions. The YEPS are now meeting monthly and Menter Iaith are promoting their Forum at all four Welsh medium secondary schools. Once the Menter Iaith support for Youth Forums is re-established, they will participate in the YEPS Youth Forum.
	Work in partnership to coordinate and deliver Holiday Programmes	This is developed each term, in line with the YEPS Programme. The YEPS, Urdd and Menter Iaith utilise	This is developed each term, in line with the YEPS Programme. The YEPS, Urdd and Menter Iaith utilise	This year all holiday provision has been virtual. The demand for Welsh medium virtual provision has

Page 97	<p>through the medium of Welsh.</p>	<p>each other's social media platforms along the Wicid website to promote opportunities to young people.</p>	<p>each other's social media platforms along with the Wicid website to promote opportunities to young people.</p> <p>Information is shared by partners at the Youth Support Services Strategy Working Group to ensure a comprehensive provision is offered to young people with a sufficient opportunity to participate through the medium of Welsh.</p>	<p>been far less than physical provision. Some virtual activities have been offered through the medium of Welsh or bilingually, including Garth Olwg Virtual Youth Club.</p>
	<p>Promote activities delivered through the medium of Welsh through websites and social media platforms.</p>	<p>This is developed each term, in line with the YEPS Programme. The YEPS, the Urdd and Menter Iaith utilise each other's social media platforms along with the Wicid website to promote opportunities to young people.</p>	<p>This is developed each term, in line with the YEPS Programme. The YEPS, Urdd and Menter Iaith utilise each other's social media platforms along with the Wicid website to promote opportunities to young people.</p> <p>Over 100 young people participated in the YEPS activities through the medium of Welsh.</p>	<p>All provision has been promoted to young people through the YEPS, Urdd and Menter Iaith's social media platforms along with the Wicid website.</p>

Page 98			The Urdd and Menter Iaith hold annual events for young people.	
	Identify champions (both young people and adults) that can attend community events to engage with the public and promote activities on offer through the medium Welsh in the County Borough of RCT.	<p>The Welsh Language Working Group has focused on promoting provision through the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>Young people from the Menter Iaith Youth Forums promote opportunities in the County Borough of RCT for young people at their schools.</p> <p>The YEPS staff attended several community events during the summer to promote opportunities for young people, including Welsh medium provision.</p>	<p>Young people from the Menter Iaith Youth Forums promote opportunities in the County Borough of RCT for young people at their Schools.</p> <p>The YEPS staff attended several community events during the summer to promote opportunities for young people, including Welsh medium provision.</p>	The YEPS and Menter Iaith have not attended any community events this year due to the current Covid-19 restrictions.
<p>Outcome 5:</p> <p>More Learners with higher skills in Welsh.</p>	Establish a Welsh Language Working Group that will develop a joint Strategy by September 2017 that enables Welsh to become the language of social and leisure activities.	The Welsh Language Working Group was established with Youth Workers from the YEPS, the Urdd and Menter Iaith. As part of the Action Plan the Welsh Language Working	The Welsh Language Working Group has not met, however, the Urdd and Menter Iaith will be part of a Sport, Leisure, Arts and Culture Group, as part of the Youth Support Services	The Sport, Leisure, Arts and Culture Group has continued to meet, however, the Urdd have not been able to attend due staff being furloughed.

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 99</p>	<p>Welsh Language Working Group meetings to take place quarterly, with set agenda and minutes.</p> <p>Complete an Action Plan alongside the Strategy to be updated quarterly in line with the Strategy.</p>	<p>Group have worked in partnership to offer several social opportunities for young people in the County Borough of RCT to participate in sport, leisure and cultural opportunities through the medium of Welsh. This includes after school activities in all four Welsh medium secondary schools, holiday provision and two Welsh medium Youth Clubs (Talbot Green and Garth Olwg), offering evening provision for Welsh speaking young people and Welsh learners.</p> <p>The Urdd and the YEPS supported Menter Iaith at Parti Ponty, which was an event held in Pontypridd to promote the Welsh language.</p>	<p>Strategy. This will ensure that the Welsh language is considered across all provisions. These meeting will take place termly.</p> <p>An Action Plan will be created following the meeting to hold different organisations accountable for the Welsh provision they offer.</p> <p>The Urdd and the YEPS supported Menter Iaith at Parti Ponty, which was an event held in Pontypridd to promote the Welsh language.</p>	<p>Co-ordinated Welsh language community provision has not been arranged for this year due to the current Covid-19 restrictions. Virtual support and provision has been offered to young people, including virtual youth club.</p>
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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

28 JANUARY 2021

21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME – PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE EDUCATION PROVISION FOR YSGOL GYNRADD GYMRAEG LLYN-Y-FORWYN

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

**Author(s): Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Andrea Richards, Temporary Service Director of 21st Century
Schools and Transformation**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members approval to begin the relevant and required statutory consultation for the proposal to:
- Carry out a regulated alteration to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llyn-y-Forwyn (“YGG Llyn-y-Forwyn”), by way of transferring the school to a new building on a new site.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the content of this report;
- 2.2 Give formal approval to commence consultation with relevant stakeholders on the proposal to transfer the current YGG Llyn-y-Forwyn to a new building on a new site whilst maintaining the existing catchment area for the school;
- 2.3 Note any proposal, should it be approved following completion of the required statutory processes, would be implemented by March 2024; and
- 2.4 Subject to 2.2 above, give delegated authority to the Director of Education and Inclusion Services to make any minor changes that are required to the proposed consultation document (attached at Appendix B to the report) prior to its publication and the consultation commencing.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To increase capacity and improve the quality of the Welsh medium primary education provision available to learners in the Rhondda Fach area of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council school modernisation programme has been successfully making excellent progress in modernising our school estate, meeting demand for places and expanding pupil places where required including early years. The Council has been building new schools, remodelling and redeveloping schools across the County Borough providing 21st Century learning environments for our pupils, staff, parents and the wider community.

As part of the continuation of the programme urgent investment is needed to replace YGG Llyn-y-Forwyn which is currently one of the poorest buildings in the education portfolio. The rationale for bringing this proposal is set out in detail in the draft consultation document attached at Appendix B to this report.

The School

- 4.2 YGG Llyn-y-Forwyn is a traditional stone Victorian school building. The school is made up of two buildings set within an enclosed constrained site. A site condition survey conducted in 2019, indicated a grading of 'D' for condition and 'C' for suitability (where 'A' is the highest and 'D' is the lowest performing).
- 4.3 The current school is not accessible and as such not compliant with the Equality Act 2010, and given the restrictions of the site there is little that can be done to remedy this. The opportunities for outdoor play are limited; there are no external green spaces available and all of the hard play areas are affected by the sloping topography. There is no on-site staff car parking available which means that staff have to park in the neighbouring streets and the home to school transport drop-off area is located in the street below.
- 4.4 The school currently has a maintenance backlog in excess of £1.01Million.
- 4.5 The Estyn inspection carried out in January 2019 judged the school's current performance in all 5 inspection areas as 'good'. However, in their report Estyn commented on the outdoor areas of the school in that they 'have not been developed to the same standard, and use of them is very limited'.
- 4.6 Therefore, to address these issues, it is proposed a new Welsh medium primary school be created on a new site, with an investment in the region of £8.5Million to improve and expand facilities.
- 4.7 This investment would include:
- modern, flexible learning environments for all learners, a hall/dining area, and a multi-purpose learning resource area;
 - accessible internal and external facilities for wider community use;

- enhanced outdoor spaces to support the full range of curriculum activities, including an outdoor classroom and a 'forest schools' area; and,
 - improved traffic management including on site pupil bus drop off, and on site staff parking.
- 4.8 The new school would be built in accordance with Building Bulletin 99 and would be fully accessible and compliant with the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.9 65% of pupils that attend YGG Llyn-y-Forwyn use Home to School Transport. At the current site there are no drop off facilities with vehicles utilising the neighbouring streets for drop off and pick up at the beginning and end of the school day. The new school site will have dedicated on-site drop off and pick up facilities making this process safer, less disruptive for the community, and more manageable for staff at the school.
- 4.10 The investment would also include a review of safe routes to school and, if required, an investment in improvements to walkways, road crossings and traffic calming measures to ensure the required safety standards are met. This is the approach the Council has implemented in other communities through delivering the 21st Century Schools Programme with significant improvements being made.
- 4.11 To achieve these proposals, the Council is seeking to transfer the current YGG Llyn-y-Forwyn to a new building on a new school site. The catchment area of YGG Llyn-y-Forwyn would not be altered.
- 4.12 The proposal would create additional Welsh medium capacity within the Rhondda Fach area of Rhondda Cynon Taf and would contribute to the Welsh Government's ambition to have one million Welsh speakers across Wales by 2050. It would also support the delivery of some of the targets that are included within the new 10 year Welsh in Education Strategic Plan that will be brought before Cabinet in the coming months.

The Site

- 4.13 The new school building is proposed to be built on the land north side of Highfield, Ferndale, CF43 4AD, known locally as the former 'Chubb Factory'. This site was chosen as the preferred location for the school following a site appraisal of 11 areas, all located within the Rhondda Fach and each identified as potential candidate sites. Each site was appraised initially on its ability to meet the following criteria:
- Have an adequate site area;
 - Have satisfactory access which is capable of being improved;
 - Is free from any visual incumbents;
 - Close proximity to the current school;
 - Is a viable development opportunity subject to a detailed feasibility study.

- 4.14 Following visual inspections of all sites undertaken by officers from Corporate Estates, and applying the identified criteria, the 11 sites were able to be quickly narrowed to just 3, these were:
- Candidate Site 2 (Land adjacent to Ferndale Swimming Pool);
 - Candidate Site 10 (Former Chubb factory site);
 - Candidate Site 3 (Land adjacent to the south of Ferndale Community School).
- 4.15 Further feasibility and site investigations focussed on just these 3 candidate sites which ultimately resulted in the former Chubb Factory site identified as the preferred location for YGG Llyn-y-Forwyn. This conclusion was reached for a number of reasons including its size, the existing infrastructure, current access arrangements, and its proximity to the existing school.

A map showing the locations of the existing school and the preferred site is included at Appendix A.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council has to satisfy its public sector duties under the Equalities Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties). Pursuant to these legal duties Councils must in making decisions have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations on the basis of protected characteristics.
- 5.2 Equality, Welsh Language and Community Impact Assessments are being prepared in respect of this proposal and would be published on the Council's website together with a consultation document that outlines the proposal in further detail and in accordance with the requirements of Welsh Government's School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018) (the "Code").

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The consultation processes in respect of this proposal would be undertaken under the arrangements outlined in the Code and the 'Changes to the School Organisation Code in response to the coronavirus outbreak' which were updated on 8th January 2021. These arrangements stipulate that consultation must be undertaken when the proposals are at a formative stage and that consultation documents must be prepared and circulated to prescribed consultees, as well as being published on the Council website.
- 6.2 The draft consultation document for the proposal outlined in this report is attached at Appendix B to this report, although it should be noted that this remains a working document which may be subject to some minor changes before the consultation document is formally published and the consultation process commences.
- 6.3 The proposed consultation period, if it is agreed to progress this matter, would run from 1st March 2021 to 30th April 2021. Details regarding engagement

opportunities would be added to the consultation documents before the formal consultation begins, and would be carried out in line with the latest COVID guidance available at that time.

- 6.4 The proposed potential timetable for completion of each statutory process is set out in the following table:

YGG Llyn-y-Forwyn – Proposed Consultation Timeline		
Action	Detail	Dates
Cabinet Permission to Consult	Cabinet to consider this proposal and give approval to commence consultation.	28 January 2021
Statutory Public Consultation	A consultation document would be published on the Council website for a minimum of 6 weeks.	March 2021
Report back to Cabinet	Cabinet would consider the consultation response report and determine whether to publish the report and approve the publication of the proposal in the form of a statutory notice.	May 2021
Publish Statutory Notice	The statutory notice must be published for a 28 day period (if approved by Cabinet).	June 2021
Decision by Cabinet	Report back to Cabinet on outcome of statutory notice period and details of objections received, with an appropriate recommendation.	August 2021
Implementation	In accordance with Cabinet decision either status quo or implementation of proposal.	Status Quo: August 2021 New school: March 2024

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no financial implications as a result of the recommendations in this report, however should the proposals go ahead a significant capital investment will be required. The funding package will be developed alongside the consultation and decision making process.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 Part 1 of the Education Act 1996 (“the 1996 Act”) imposes a number of general duties on all local authorities in Wales. The general duty in section 13 of the 1996 Act is to contribute (so far as the Council’s powers enable them to do so) towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community by securing that efficient primary education and secondary education are available to meet the needs of the population of their area.
- 8.2 Section 13A(3) of the 1996 Act states that a local authority in Wales must ensure that their relevant education functions and their relevant training

functions are exercised by the authority with a view to promoting high standards, and promoting the fulfilment of learning potential by every person to whom the subsection applies, including those who are of compulsory school age or are below school age and are registered as pupils at schools maintained by the authority.

- 8.3 Section 14 of the 1996 Act then provides that the Council shall secure that sufficient schools for providing primary education and secondary education are available in the Council's area. Schools available for an area shall not be regarded as sufficient unless they are sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide for all pupils the opportunity for appropriate education.
- 8.4 Appropriate education means education which offers such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of (a) the pupils' different ages, abilities and aptitudes; and (b) the different periods for which they may be expected to remain at school, including practical instruction and training appropriate to their different needs.
- 8.5 Powers for councils to develop school organisation proposals are governed by the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the Code. Local authorities must, when exercising functions under Part 3 of the 2013 Act, act in accordance with any relevant requirements contained in the Code and must have regard to any relevant guidelines contained in it. A copy of the Code is found here:
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-10/schoolorganisation-code-second-edition.pdf>

9. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

- 9.1 There are links to RCTCBC's Corporate Plan for the period between 2020 to 2024, specifically the priority:
- Prosperity – Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper
 - Ensuring we have good schools so all children have access to a great education.
- 9.2 Due regard has been made to all seven well-being goals and the Five Ways of Working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which requires the Council to think about the long-term impact of decisions, on communities to prevent consistent issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

This proposal would contribute to achieving the wellbeing goals by:

- Improving sustainability of school buildings in the Council portfolio through a commitment to achieving a zero carbon building and building to BREEAM excellent.

- Providing additional school places to meet WG targets and to promote the Welsh language in the Community.
- Opening new community facilities that would create opportunities for local people to utilise.

This proposal would achieve the five ways of working by:

- Creating a new school environment that can deliver the new curriculum for Wales as set out in the national mission statement.
- Provide first class learning facilities for pupils and the wider community and contribute towards a healthier Wales by providing additional outdoor sport facilities for pupils.
- Contributing towards a prosperous Wales by committing to opportunities for local tradespeople and to use local resources, wherever possible to build the new school.
- Engaging with the community on a thorough consultation with opportunities for all stakeholders in the Community to engage throughout the process.

9.3 An Equality Impact Assessment which would include further detail on the contribution of the proposal to the Wellbeing of Future generations Act would form an integral part of the consultation document. This would be available for all stakeholders to view and comment upon as a part of the consultation process. A Welsh Language Impact Assessment will also be undertaken as part of the consultation.

10. **CONCLUSION**

10.1 The proposal to construct a new school builds upon the momentum gathered to improve Welsh medium education provision throughout the County Borough, providing improved facilities and increasing the number of pupil places available. This proposed investment in YGG Llyn-y-Forwyn provides the opportunity for more learners to benefit from improved educational facilities taught through the medium of Welsh.

10.2 It is recommended therefore, that Members give approval to officers to commence the consultation processes necessary, in accordance with the School Organisation Code 2018, to achieve the proposal outlined in this report.



Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee-

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Background Papers-

None



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

28th JANUARY 2021

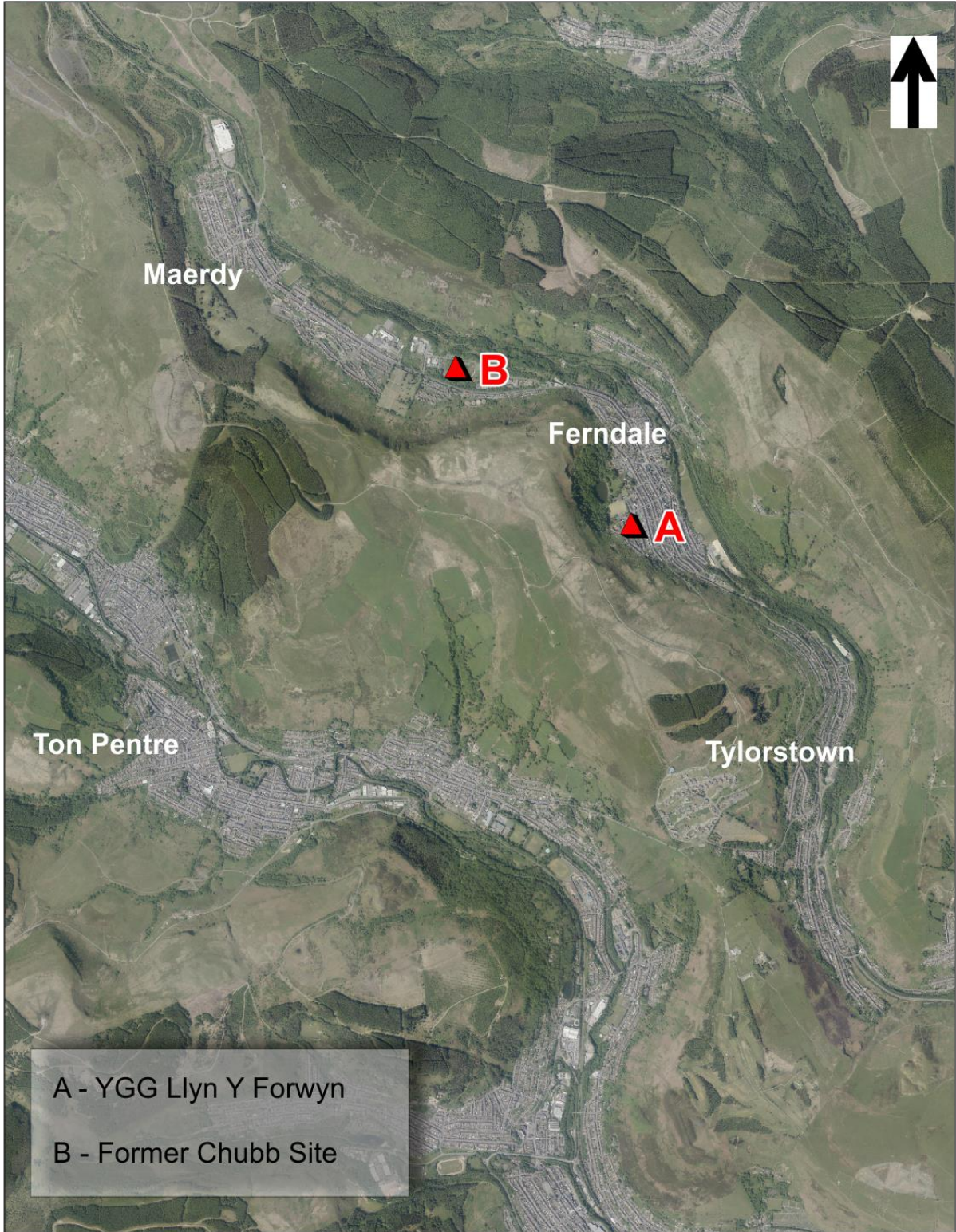
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APPENDIX A



Candidate Sites In Rhondda Fach

Map produced by Corporate Asset Data Team based on information supplied



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21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS



CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO CARRY OUT A REGULATED ALTERATION AND TRANSFER YSGOL GYNRADD GYMRAEG LLYN Y FORWYN TO A NEW BUILDING ON A NEW SITE

This consultation document and appendices are also available on the 'Get Involved' page on the Council website



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Introduction

The Council wishes to seek the views of stakeholders on the proposal to carry out a regulated alteration to:

- Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llyn y Forwyn (YGG Llyn y Forwyn), by way of transferring the school to a brand new building on a new site. The new school building is proposed to be built on the land north side of Highfield, Ferndale, CF43 4AD, known locally as the former 'Chubb Factory'. It is proposed that the regulated alteration will take place by March 2024.

This proposal is made in accordance with the School Organisation Code – 2018 (011/2018). Section 2.3 of the School Organisation Code – 2018 refers to regulated alterations to a school, which includes:

- The transfer of any school to a new site or sites.

Who will we consult with?

We are seeking the views of the following stakeholders:

- The Governing Body of YGG Llyn y Forwyn.
- Parents/carers, prospective parents/carers where possible, and staff members of YGG Llyn y Forwyn.
- Pupils of YGG Llyn y Forwyn.
- Other Governing Bodies of neighbouring primary schools.
- Neighbouring Local Authorities
- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authorities.
- Welsh Ministers.
- Members of the Senedd for the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf constituencies and regional Members of the Senedd for the area.
- Members of Parliament for the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf Constituencies.
- Estyn.
- Teaching and staff trade unions.
- Central South Consortium Joint Education Service.
- Police and Crime Commissioner for the area.
- Childcare providers.
- Mudiad Meithrin.
- Menter Iaith
- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.
- Children and Young People's Partnership.
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.
- Welsh Language Commissioner.

What will the consultation process entail?

The consultation will start on Monday March 1st 2021 and will be completed at 5pm on Friday April 30th 2021. The feedback from the consultation will be collated and summarised, and a report presented to the Council's Cabinet in May 2021. This consultation report will be available for all persons to view on the Council's website and copies can be obtained on request from the address detailed on Page 4 of this document.

The Council's Cabinet will consider the report and will decide, based on the feedback, whether to proceed with the proposal, make changes to the proposal or not proceed with the proposal. If the Cabinet decides not to proceed, that will be the end of this proposal.

If Cabinet decide to proceed with the proposal, a statutory notice is published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2018 requires that anyone wishing to make objections to a school organisation proposal has the opportunity to do so. To be considered as statutory objections, objections **must** be made in writing or by email, and sent to the Council within 28 days of the date on which the proposal was published.

The Council's Cabinet will consider the outcome of the statutory notice at the next available Cabinet meeting and determine whether to implement the proposal.

If there are objections, the Council's Director of Education and Inclusion Services will publish an objection report providing a summary of the objections and their response to them within 7 days of the day of the determination of the proposal. This report will also be available for all persons to view on the Council's website and copies can be obtained on request from the addresses detailed on Page 4 of this document.

If the Council's Cabinet approve the proposal, the proposal will be implemented in accordance with the date given in the statutory notice or any subsequently modified date. In the case of this proposal, the implementation date will be no later than March 2024 for the transfer of YGG Llyn y Forwyn to the new site.

What do you have to consider?

The remainder of the consultation document sets out the rationale for the proposed transfer of YGG Llyn y Forwyn to a new school on a new site. We would like you to consider the information contained within this document and to hear your views as to whether or not you support the proposal. A new school building to accommodate all children who require a place at YGG Llyn y Forwyn is proposed to be built on the site of the former Chubb factory.

How do you make your views known?

In order to comply with the Welsh Government's most recent Covid guidance, face-to-face meetings will not be arranged. However, virtual sessions with the staff and Governing Body at YGG Llyn y Forwyn will be organised.

A consultation questionnaire is attached on page 21 of this document, it is also available on the Council's website on the 'Get Involved' page.

The questionnaire also enables consultees to register their wish to be notified of the publication of the consultation report once presented to the Council's Cabinet.

You are also welcome to put your views, comments and any questions you may have in writing to:

Director of Education and Inclusion Services
21st Century Schools
Ty Trevithick
Abercynon
CF45 4UQ

E-mail: schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk

All correspondence should be received no later than 5pm on Friday April 30th 2021.

Please note that responses to the consultation will not be counted as objections to the proposal unless expressly requested. Objections can only be forwarded following the publication of the statutory notice.

The views of children and young people

The Council has acknowledged that the voice of young people is about involving them as active participants in the development, delivery, management and improvement of their educational and student experience.

Young people have a right to express their views in all matters affecting them and for their views to be heard and given due consideration in accordance with their age and maturity. As such, the 21st Century Schools Team will ensure that suitable arrangements are made to involve pupils as active participants throughout this consultation process, and if a decision is made to progress the proposal, throughout the implementation process.

The Council will consult with pupils who attend YGG Llyn y Forwyn by producing a children and young people's version of the consultation document and consultation response form. In order to comply with Welsh Government's latest guidance on Covid-19, we will work collaboratively with YGG Llyn y Forwyn to facilitate a virtual meeting using video conferencing technology (Microsoft Teams/Zoom) to discuss the proposal with pupils at the school, and talk them through the child friendly version of the consultation document. Notes from this discussion will be included in the documentation forwarded to the Council's Cabinet for consideration once the consultation period has ended.

Community, Equality and Welsh Language Impact Assessments

As set out in the Welsh Government School Organisation Code 2018, it is a requirement to publish Community Impact, Welsh Language Impact and Equality Impact Assessments. These have been produced as an annex to this document and are also available on the Council's website.

DRAFT

Background to the proposal

YGG Llyn y Forwyn – Where we are now...

YGG Llyn y Forwyn is a Welsh medium community school located at Darran Terrace, Ferndale. The school site consists of a traditional stone Victorian School building. According to the condition survey of the school carried out by the Council in 2019, YGG Llyn y Forwyn is graded D for condition and C for suitability, where A is the highest and D is the lowest performing building respectively. It is acknowledged that this is the worst school in the Council's education portfolio in terms of condition and suitability.



The view of the existing school building from Darran Terrace.



The view of the tarmac yard servicing the infant block.

The site consists of two early 20th century dressed stone buildings, set within a sloping tarmac covered site with both properties extending over two storeys. A site condition survey undertaken by the Council in 2019 reported that the roof is now nearing the end of its natural life.

The site itself and both school buildings are not accessible and do not comply with the Equality Act 2010.

The survey also reported that both blocks show water ingress through the fabric of the building, which has resulted in damaged plasterwork and rotten timber with varying levels of water damage to all rooms in the school. The current figure for the backlog maintenance work that would be essential to make YGG Llyn y Forwyn safe, watertight and warm is over £1.01 million.

The site is enclosed on all sides by large retaining walls and a sloping topography. The school is in the centre of a residential area making access to the site challenging. There are no on-site car parking facilities for staff, and no on-site drop off for the home to school transport. The neighbouring streets are used to accommodate both provisions which can be challenging on occasions given the numbers of residents and private vehicles in the locality.

The topography of the site is challenging given the severely sloping outdoor, hard play areas of the site and as a result staff face regular challenges in the delivery of outdoor activities. To their credit they use the best of the facilities that are available to them locally, as they use the nearby park to deliver aspects of the curriculum and their after-school sports clubs. This situation, although adequate, is far from ideal.

The pupil numbers in YGG Llyn y Forwyn over the past four years are shown in the following table and are obtained from the statutory Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) which must be undertaken in January each year. The number of nursery age pupils for each year is shown separately, as required by the Welsh Government’s statutory School Organisation Code (2018).

YGG Llyn y Forwyn					
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total statutory aged pupils	165	168	167	160	156
Nursery pupils	36	30	21	38	26

Over the next five years the pupil forecasts for YGG Llyn y Forwyn, which are calculated in accordance with guidance issued by Welsh Government, are as follows:

YGG Llyn y Forwyn								
	Capacity of the School	2020/2021 (Actual)	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	% surplus places in 2024/2025
Statutory aged pupils	197	156	150	155	151	148	144	26.9%

Nursery pupils	28	26	33	31	29	32	31	-10.7%
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What is the basis for this proposal?

It was acknowledged in the 2019 Estyn inspection report for YGG Llyn y Forwyn that ‘the school is a happy community’ where ‘pupils use the Welsh language with pride’. This very positive observation is something that will not change as the ethos of the school will be transferred to the new school building at the new site, with current staffing being maintained for pupils to continue to benefit from.

Due to its sloping, enclosed site and the limitations of the building, YGG Llyn y Forwyn cannot be physically developed from a technical perspective. The site, as a whole, is severely restricted and the age and construction of the buildings prevent the school from receiving any significant upgrades which would allow it to be deemed a 21st Century Schools’ provision.

The Council believes that this proposal represents the best opportunity to safeguard and sustain educational standards for the future and provides a platform for further improvement through significant investment in permanent and fit for purpose facilities. This investment will create a stimulating teaching and learning environment with 21st Century facilities including improved ICT provision, creative outdoor play areas and access to community facilities. The design will be focused on creating a flexible environment that fosters pupils’ personal growth in communication, collaboration, creativity and leadership skills.

Improved school buildings and improved school performance will potentially lead to additional pupils accessing Welsh Medium education locally, increasing the critical mass and providing more professional teaching opportunities for teachers. A new 21st Century school environment will have a positive impact on both pupil and staff wellbeing and will provide strengthened opportunities for developing a community focused school.

The existing school buildings at YGG Llyn y Forwyn require significant repairs and are no longer fit for purpose, with outstanding maintenance in excess of £1.01 million. The school also lacks any outdoor green space, which limits the breadth of curriculum that teaching staff can deliver outside. The benefits of outdoor learning in the early years is well documented as this can have positive health and wellbeing benefits and can also help to connect children to the environment. Learning outside the classroom can also be an effective tool for teaching and learning which has been proven to raise attainment and achievement, improve behaviour and enhance the engagement of all groups of pupils, including those who are hard to engage inside the classroom environment.

The proposal to carry out a regulated alteration to YGG Llyn y Forwyn is considered necessary due to the existing school building not being fit for purpose. It is the Council’s view that a new, purpose-built 21st Century School building will help the school to further cultivate a learning environment which nurtures and supports pupils, staff and the use of the Welsh language.

What alternative options have been considered?

Given the limitations of the existing school site, and the challenging topography of YGG Llyn y Forwyn's catchment area, the number of alternative options available for consideration are limited.

The land north side of Highfield, Ferndale, CF43 4AD, known locally as the former 'Chubb Factory,' was chosen as the preferred location for the school following an assessment of a number of sites all located within the catchment area of YGG Llyn y Forwyn. Each site was appraised initially on its ability to meet the following criteria:

- Have an adequate site area;
- Have satisfactory access which is capable of being improved;
- Is free from any visual incumbents;
- Close proximity to the current school;
- Is a viable development opportunity subject to a detailed feasibility study.

Following the site assessment, the site known locally as the former 'Chubb Factory' was ultimately chosen for a number of reasons including its size, the existing infrastructure, current access arrangements, and its proximity to the existing school.

In accordance with the School Organisation Code 2018, further alternative options were also identified and consciously considered. Some of the benefits and disadvantages of each of the discounted options are listed in the table that follows:

Option	Benefits	Disadvantages
Retain the status quo.	<p>No capital investment required by the Council.</p> <p>No disruption to the pupils, parents/carers and staff.</p> <p>No impact on home to school transport.</p>	<p>Aspects of the school building have reached the end of their life and the building is now beyond economic repair.</p> <p>Not of a 21st Century schools standard with in adequate outdoor space. As such delivering the New Curriculum for Wales will be a challenge.</p> <p>Inaccessible site - not compliant with the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>Backlog maintenance of £1.01m will remain.</p> <p>Parking issues will not be resolved.</p>

<p>Build a new school on the existing site.</p>	<p>No impact on pupils in terms of travel distances.</p> <p>No impact on home to school transport.</p>	<p>Significant capital investment required.</p> <p>Temporary classrooms will need to be utilised for the duration of the construction and given the site restrictions may need to be located elsewhere.</p> <p>The topography of the site restricts the ability to build a fully accessible school fit for the 21st Century.</p> <p>Site restrictions limit the ability to improve the outdoor areas.</p> <p>Parking issues will not be resolved due to location.</p>
<p>Create a 3 to 19 Welsh medium school on the site of an associated school of YGG Llyn y Forwyn.</p>	<p>Larger school departments will promote the sharing of skills and expertise.</p> <p>Greater opportunities for staff to move between key stages and further develop expertise.</p> <p>Reduce the anxiety caused by transition.</p> <p>Improve the range and quality of facilities and learning resources available to the benefit of all pupils.</p>	<p>Pupils will have a longer distance to travel to school.</p> <p>Home to school transport costs will increase.</p> <p>There will be Human Resources implications for staff.</p> <p>The topography of the associated school site severely restricts the ability to build a fully accessible school fit for the 21st Century.</p> <p>The traffic impact of additional school transport in the community is unsustainable and the existing site cannot support additional school transport.</p>

Benefits and Disadvantages, Risks and Mitigation Factors

Any proposals involving school reorganisation will inevitably cause some disruption and uncertainty, although experience shows that this can be kept to a minimum through meaningful engagement throughout the consultation process, and if a decision is made to progress with the proposal, during the implementation phase.

The benefits and disadvantages of the proposal are highlighted below, as is information as to how any identified risks can be managed by the Council and the school.

Benefits

A new 21st Century standard school will deliver a significant improvement in the quality of the educational provision, having a significant positive impact upon the educational performance of the pupils and staff morale.

The school will be designed to be energy efficient and will include renewable energy systems including photovoltaic panels and rainwater harvesting. The school will be built to BREEAM Excellent standards, contributing to both the Council's commitment to becoming a 'carbon free Council by 2050' and the Welsh Government's Climate Change Strategy.

There will be significant traffic improvements with the inclusion of a dedicated staff car park and an on-site home to school transport drop-off area.

The school will be designed to be a fully accessible and fully integrated community school. A dedicated area will be designed within the school itself so that the local community will be allowed to safely utilise the facilities at the school, both during and after the school day.

Improving and enhancing the physical aspect of the Welsh medium provision throughout the County Borough is a critical factor of the WESP in supporting the achievement of the target to increase the number of seven-year-old children being taught through the medium of Welsh. This proposal is another example of the Council's commitment to ensure that these targets are met.

The external areas will allow staff, pupils and the community to experience a greater breadth of teaching and learning experiences.

Given the proposed location of the new school, it is anticipated that there will be no additional transport costs.

The proposed site is within the existing catchment area and so there will be limited disruption for pupils, staff and parents/carers.

Disadvantages

The capital cost of the new school will be significant.

Some of the pupils and staff will inevitably live further from the new school site.

Moving to a new school site could cause some anxiety for some pupils, staff, and parents/carers.

Risks	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating Actions
Parents choose to send their children to another school	Low	Low	Engagement with parents/carers will continue throughout the consultation period, and if a decision is taken by Cabinet to implement the proposal, this engagement will continue.

YGG Llyn y Forwyn – Where we'd like to be...

It is being proposed that a new school building for YGG Llyn y Forwyn will be constructed on the site known locally as the former 'Chubb Factory' site, Ferndale. The school will be a replacement for the existing school building and will cater for children aged between 3 and 11 years of age who require Welsh medium education. It will have a proposed admissions number of 30 pupils per year group, and an overall pupil capacity of 210 (plus nursery).

The new school will be built in accordance with Building Bulletin 99 and will be fully accessible and compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

The accommodation will consist of:

- Modern, flexible learning environments for all pupils, a large hall/dining area, a multi-purpose learning resource area and fully accessible facilities.
- Internal and external areas for use by the local community.
- Some additional capacity and space for additional learning needs interventions.
- Enhanced outdoor spaces to support the full range of curriculum activities, including an outdoor classroom and a 'forest schools' area.
- Improved traffic management including on site bus drop off for pupils and on-site staff parking.



A multi-purpose learning resource area or 'heart space' at a 21st Century School delivered by the Council.



Typical junior classroom in a 21st Century School delivered by the Council.



Typical junior classroom in a 21st Century School delivered by the Council.

The school will be built in accordance with Building Bulletin 99 which requires new primary schools to include provision for team sports, including a playing field area suitable for team games for pupils aged 8 and over and a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) for sports such as basketball and netball. New schools are also required to include soft play areas, commonly made up of grassed space for pupils to sit and socialise, alongside hard surfaced playgrounds and sheltered space to complement the soft play areas around the school site. The new school will also include a habitat area which will act as a space for outdoor learning and provide a valuable teaching and learning resource.



External view of Cwmaman Primary School opened by The Council in 2018.



Example of MUGA servicing Tonyrefail Community School.



Example of outdoor learning area at Cwmaman Primary School.

There will be on-site provision for staff parking as well as an on-site dedicated drop-off area for the home to school transport vehicles.

A new Cylch Meithrin will also form a part of the new school site and will offer pre-school Cylch Meithrin sessions for 2 to 3 year olds. This provision is already operating at the existing school site, however, given the limitations on the space available numbers are relatively low. It is anticipated that being able to offer this provision in brand new facilities as part of the YGG Llyn y Forwyn site will encourage pupil numbers to grow. This will assist in ensuring a language continuum of Welsh medium provision for children from the age of two to eleven years, within one primary school site.

The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP)

All Local Authorities in Wales must produce a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). The WESP is a long term language planning tool which sets the direction for the strategic planning, delivery and growth in Welsh medium and Welsh language education. Through the WESP, and effective strategic planning and investment, The Council aims to contribute significantly to achieving the vision of one million people in Wales being Welsh speakers by 2050 as set out in Cymraeg 2050. The Council's current WESP can be viewed and downloaded from the Council website via:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/WelshServices/Relateddocs/WelshinEducationStrategicPlan201720.pdf>

The new ten year WESP for the period between 2022 to 2032 is currently being written and will be subject to a statutory consultation process shortly. Included amongst the list of strategic developments, actions and outcomes the Council will undertake to help achieve the targets set out in the WESP are:

- New and improved school buildings with appropriate capacity levels to fully meet forecasted demand for Welsh medium provision in their catchment areas.

The proposal to transfer YGG Llyn y Forwyn to a new purpose built 21st Century standard school building with an increased capacity will contribute to RCT's goal of increasing the number of year one pupils accessing Welsh medium education. This proposal will expand the opportunities for pupils to pursue an education through the medium of Welsh and will have a positive impact upon Welsh language provision.

Admission Arrangements

There will be no changes to the catchment area for YGG Llyn y Forwyn. The school will cater for children aged between 3 to 11 years of age requiring Welsh medium primary education. It will have a proposed admissions number of 30 pupils per year group, and an overall pupil capacity of 210 (plus nursery).

In the case of oversubscription at any school, published admissions criteria are applied to all applications received for places, to determine which pupils are successful in obtaining the places available. These criteria, which are outlined in our school admission policy booklet entitled 'Starting School' and listed in priority order are:

- Category One – 'Looked after' children (children in public care) and previously 'looked after' children.
- Category Two – Children whose home is inside the school's catchment area and have an older sibling attending the school from the same address, who will continue to attend that school on the expected date of admission of the younger child.
- Category Three – Children whose home is inside the school's catchment area who do not have an older sibling attending the school.
- Category Four – Children whose home is outside the school's catchment area and have an older sibling attending the school from the same address, who will continue to attend that school on the expected date of admission of the younger child
- Category Five – Children whose home is outside the school's catchment area who do not have an older sibling attending the school.

The term 'home' in the categories above refers to the actual location of the residential dwelling in which the child lives.

Children will be admitted up to the Published Admission Number in the order of priority as outlined above. If, within any one of the priority categories listed, all of the applicants cannot be offered a place, preference will be given to children living nearest to the school. Distance will be measured using the shortest, safe walking route between the home address and the nearest open school gate. In areas where no safe walking route has been identified, the shortest driving route between the home address and the nearest open school gate will be used. This distance will be measured using the 'MapInfo System' only, measurements calculated by any other system will not be considered. The home address in instances where parents/carers have shared responsibility for children, will be the address to which Child Benefit is paid.

The likely impact of the proposal

The educational case for the proposal

This proposal forms a part of the Council's wider 21st Century Schools Investment Programme and contributes to the delivery of sustainable schools fit for the 21st Century and supports the better strategic management of the Council's education estate.

In addition to this objective, school organisational proposals should highlight the educational benefits that any change will offer, particularly in relation to overall improvements in standards, but also in terms of the social and emotional development of children, which would usually impact beneficially on their overall achievement and outcomes.

YGG Llyn y Forwyn was inspected by Estyn in January 2019 and the school's current performance in the five inspection areas was follows:

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning	Good
Teaching and Learning Experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Estyn also set out recommendations for the school to implement in order to build upon the progress made to date. Estyn's recommendations were as follows:

- R1** Ensure appropriate opportunities for pupils in the Foundation Phase to make choices in relation to their learning so that they develop as independent learners.
- R2** Improve pupils' information and communication technology skills.
- R3** Ensure that Key Stage 2 teachers provide a balanced curriculum and develop pupils' scientific knowledge and understanding, in particular.

It is the Council's view that the transfer of YGG Llyn y Forwyn to a new, purpose built school building fit for the 21st Century would help the school to make progress towards achieving these recommendations and have a major positive impact on all five Estyn inspection areas, as follows:

1. **Standards** – A new school building fit for the 21st Century would provide staff and pupils with enhanced teaching spaces, dedicated resource areas, stimulating learning environments, state-of-the-art information and communication technology equipment, all of which would support the school to raise standards, and achieve Estyn's recommendation of improving pupils' ICT skills.
2. **Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning** – The existing school site has extremely limited outdoor space, with no green areas. Transferring YGG Llyn y Forwyn to a new site would provide extensive outdoor space, including green space, for pupils to learn and play in. It is the

Council's view that pupil wellbeing and attitudes to learning would benefit from a diverse and engaging outdoor space.

3. **Teaching and Learning Experiences** – A fit for purpose school building would ensure that staff are able to provide a balanced curriculum at all key stages in line with the new Curriculum for Wales – 2022, particularly in the areas of physical education, Science and ICT, which would support the school in achieving its third Estyn recommendation. A 21st Century learning environment will also provide pupils with greater flexibility and therefore greater choice in their learning experience, supporting the school in making progress towards recommendation one.
4. **Care, Support and Guidance** – A new 21st Century School building will enable the school to build upon the good working practices and initiatives that YGG Llyn y Forwyn already have in place. Providing a significantly improved external environment and the provision of green spaces will provide opportunities to further develop extra-curricular activities to encourage healthy lifestyles for the school community. A fully accessible building and the provision of flexible spaces will allow the school to extend its good practice to allow further engagement with families. The new building will allow the school to nurture and grow this aspect of its ethos exponentially.
5. **Leadership and Management** – A purpose built school building would allow the already effective leadership team at YGG Llyn y Forwyn to focus more on working towards Estyn's recommendations. It would remove the burden of time consuming and expensive maintenance issues present in the existing school building, which would allow staff to focus on delivering the best teaching and learning and outcomes for their pupils.

In addition, the new school, which would be built to 21st Century school standards would have a positive impact on the ability of the school to deliver the full curriculum at the Foundation Phase and each Key Stage of education. There would be no limitations in this regard.

What is the likely impact of the proposals on pupils?

It is anticipated that the proposed changes will not adversely impact upon pupils. Numerous benefits can be realised – the principal change will be an improvement in the quality of the educational setting, and this should have a significant impact on educational performance of the pupils.

The catchment area of the primary school will not change, i.e. it will continue to be the same as the current catchment area of YGG Llyn y Forwyn. A number of the Lower Super Output Areas within the catchment area are amongst the most deprived in Wales according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 Report.

The Council's policy regarding home to school transport provision will continue to apply. The difference in time taken to travel to the new school site will be negligible as it is in close proximity to the existing school. Some pupils may have a slightly longer journey to school but many will have a shorter one. Overall, we consider the impact on pupil travel arrangements to be neutral.

The Welsh Government and the Council has adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which is expressed in seven core aims that all children and young people:

1. Have a flying start in life.
2. Have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities.
3. Enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation.

4. Have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities.
5. Are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised.
6. Have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing.
7. Are not disadvantaged by poverty.

The Council considers that this proposal benefits the pupils attending YGG Llyn y Forwyn in accordance with the seven core aims set out above.

Further information relating to the likely impact of the proposals on pupils, including how the proposal contributes to all seven goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015 and an assessment of the proposal on the five ways of working, can be found in the Equality Impact Assessment which is at Appendix B.

What is the likely impact of the proposal on staff?

In making the proposed change, most things will not change for the staff at all. The school, including all staff will be relocating en masse, so there are no Human Resource implications as a result of implementing these proposals. Indeed, the expectation is that the proposed change will impact upon staff positively.

The principal change will be an improvement in the quality of the educational setting and the working environment and as a result we anticipate that this will have a significant impact on staff morale, well-being and retention.

Financial implications of the proposal

YGG Llyn y Forwyn is not currently operating within a deficit budget and there is no evidence that these proposals will affect this positive financial position. In addition, no increase in home to school transport costs are projected.

There is an expectation that while some savings will be identified given that the new school will be maintenance free and more importantly more energy efficient, which is in stark contrast to the poor condition of the existing school building, it is anticipated that there will be an increase in the rates payable for the new school building. It is not possible to be precise about future revenue costs, as much would depend upon the future decisions of the Governing Body, however the projection is that any increase in costs and any savings realised will negate the other with there being a neutral overall budgetary impact. What is certain is that this proposal will remove a significant backlog maintenance figure in excess of £1.01 million and eliminate day-to-day costs associated with the failing buildings.

This proposal will deliver a newly constructed school for YGG Llyn y Forwyn at an estimated capital cost of £8.5 million. This capital element of the proposal will be funded by the Council's Capital Investment Programme. Project costs will be developed alongside the consultation process and approvals sought in line with the Council's decision making procedures.

Home to School Transport Provision

There is a statutory duty placed upon all Local Authorities in Wales to provide pupils with free transport to their nearest suitable school if they reside beyond safe 'walking distance' to that school. The term suitable school applies to the catchment area English, Welsh, dual language or

voluntary aided (faith) mainstream school or special school/class as appropriate. The law relating to safe 'walking distance' is defined as two miles for pupils of compulsory school age receiving primary education and three miles for pupils of compulsory school age receiving secondary education.

The Council has exercised the discretionary powers afforded to it under the provisions of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 to make a more generous provision to pupils. The relevant information in relation to YGG Llyn y Forwyn is set out below:

- The eligibility criterion for walking distance for pupils receiving compulsory primary education at their nearest suitable school has been set at 1½ miles, instead of 2 miles as required by the Measure.
- Free transport to their nearest suitable school, where places are available, is provided to pupils who meet the 1½ mile eligibility criterion from the start of Foundation Phase (the start of the school term after their third birthday), rather than from the start of compulsory education (the start of the school term after their fifth birthday) as required by the Measure.
- The term suitable school applies to the catchment area English, Welsh, dual language or voluntary aided (faith) mainstream school or special school/class as appropriate.

The full information in relation to the Council's Home to School transport provision viewed and downloaded from the Council website via:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ParkingRoadsandTravel/Travel/SchoolandCollegeTransport/SchoolandCollegeTransport.aspx>

Land and buildings information

If the proposals outlined in this document are implemented, the existing school site will become redundant. As this is an initial consultation process, no decisions have yet been made in respect of the future of these sites and buildings. This issue will be managed in accordance with the agreed Council Policy on Surplus Land and Buildings.

Consultation Response Pro-forma

In order to comply with its legal duty under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, and help the Council reach a decision on the proposal below, it would be very helpful if you could answer the following questions. Please note, any personal information given by you will not be shared and only used to provide you with feedback, should you request it. Any comments that could identify you will be anonymised in the consultation report produced. Completed questionnaires should be returned to:

Director of Education and Inclusion Services
21st Century Schools Team
Ty Trevithick
Abercynon
CF45 4UQ

Or

Email: schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk

The Proposal

To relocate YGG Llyn y Forwyn from its existing site to a newly constructed school building on the built on the land North Side of Highfield, Ferndale, CF43 4AD, known locally as the former 'Chubb Factory'.

Do you agree with proposal 1? Yes No Not sure

Please let us know the reasons for your choice

- Do you think the proposal could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive or Negative)?

- Do you think the proposal in any way it treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?

- How positive effects on the Welsh Language could be increased, or negative effects be decreased?

The Council is committed to keeping your personal information safe and secure and keeping you informed about how we use your information. To learn about how your privacy is protected and how and why we use your personal information to provide you with services, please visit our Consultation privacy notice:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/DataProtectionandFreedomofInformation/DataProtection/serviceprivacynotices/ChiefExecutives/ConsultationPrivacyNotice.aspx>

And

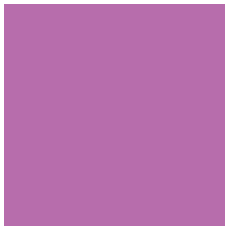
<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/DataProtectionandFreedomofInformation/DataProtection/DataProtection.aspx>

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

28TH JANUARY 2021

THE COUNCIL'S 2021/22 REVENUE BUDGET

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES

AUTHOR: Barrie Davies (01443 424026)

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides Cabinet with information in respect of the 2021/22 local government settlement and the outcomes of the budget consultation phase 1 exercise, to assist with its deliberations in formulating the revenue budget strategy for the financial year 2021/22, which it will recommend to Council, for approval.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 To note and consider the outcomes of the budget consultation phase 1 process.
- 2.3 Consider and if appropriate agree the draft 2021/22 Revenue Budget Strategy, detailed in the attached Discussion Paper 'Appendix A', as the basis upon which a second phase of consultation will take place.
- 2.4 Agree the draft timetable for setting the 2021/22 revenue budget as set out at Appendix A2.

- 2.5 Agree to receive feedback from the second phase of budget consultation in order to consider and determine the final budget strategy for submission to Council.
- 2.6 Agree 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.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The revenue budget for the financial year ending the 31st March 2022, must be constructed in accordance with the “Budget and Policy Framework” (contained in the Council’s Constitution), which was agreed by Members in May 2002.
- 3.2 Under these arrangements, it is for the Council’s “respective Chief Officers” to report to Cabinet, and for the Cabinet to then recommend a budget to Council, after having conducted an appropriate budget consultation exercise. I have reproduced the relevant sections of the Constitution at Appendix A1, for Members’ information.
- 3.3 A draft timetable for agreeing the 2021/22 revenue budget strategy is attached at Appendix A2.

4.0 THE KEY ELEMENTS OF A BALANCED BUDGET STRATEGY FOR 2021/22

- 4.1 The Council’s Senior Leadership Team have considered budget strategy options throughout the Autumn and in light of emerging delays to the WG Local Government Settlement timescales as a consequence of delays to the planned spending review, alongside the significant and unprecedented impact which the pandemic has had across all our services.
- 4.2 I have reported on the implications of the provisional settlement and on our updated budget requirement to Council on the 20th January 2021 and set this out in detail in the discussion paper attached at Appendix A.
- 4.3 Based on the provisional settlement and alongside our updated base budget requirements reflecting the continuing increased pressures across many of our services, I have also set out a high level robust and



balanced budget strategy option which would include a Council Tax increase of 2.65%.

- 4.4 The outcome from the Phase 1 budget consultation process is also now available for Cabinet to consider alongside the proposals.
- 4.5 Clearly, there are many possible budget permutations open to the Council, but Members' overriding ambition will be to construct a balanced budget package, that is equitable and fair to all by limiting any impact on our much valued service provision and where possible, provides for targeting resources to key service areas, whilst, at the same time, avoiding an excessive increase in the Council Tax levied by the County Borough Council.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The Senior Leadership Team holds the collective view that the Council should commit itself to setting its 2021/22 revenue spending and, as a consequence, the Council Tax levied next year, 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.
- 5.2 A translation of the Senior Leadership Team's recommended strategic approach into a high level budget for 2021/22 with a Council Tax increase of 2.65% is attached to this report.
- 5.3 Given that the financial resources currently available to the Council are finite and that future local government settlements continue to be uncertain, the Senior Leadership Team believes that an ongoing, robust medium-term financial strategy is essential to ensure that our core public services continue to be improved.

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APPENDIX A

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

28th JANUARY 2021

A DISCUSSION PAPER PREPARED BY THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM IN RESPONSE TO THE 2021/22 LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT

**AUTHOR: BARRIE DAVIES, DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES
(01443) 424026**

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Constitution sets out the procedure, which must be adhered to when setting the Council's annual revenue budget. It is a specific requirement of the Constitution that the Council's Chief Officers first report to the Cabinet, to advise Members on the issues involved (see extract of the Constitution at Appendix 1). Following due consideration of that report, and after having conducted an appropriate budget consultation exercise, it will then be for the Cabinet to determine a strategy and recommend a budget to Council, for final approval. A timetable for this process is attached at Appendix 2.
- 1.2 Prior to determining its preferred budget strategy for the financial year ending the 31st March 2022, the Cabinet must consider:
- The Council's own financial position.
 - The financial and service implications of the Welsh Government's (WG) 2021/22 local government settlement.
 - Our Cwm Taf – Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan 2018 -2023.
 - The Council's Corporate Plan 2020 - 2024.
 - The level of demand and the statutory basis for delivery of services.
 - The results of the General Budget Strategy consultation exercise.
 - The critical role of the Council in responding to the pandemic and supporting and protecting our residents, businesses and communities.
- 1.3 If Members are to arrive at the best possible outcome for our residents, it will be important that an appropriate weighting is given to each of the key determinants in paragraph 1.2 above, so that relative resourcing and spending priorities can be properly determined.
- 1.4 Accurate and up-to-date information is readily available in respect of the Council's own financial position, and officers have now analysed the 2021/22 local government settlement from Rhondda Cynon Taf's perspective.

2.0 THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL POSITION

- 2.1 Members have continued to receive regular updates on the financial position and projections for this Council during 2020/21. A key starting point and important consideration is the annual statement of accounts. At the Council meeting on the 25th November 2020, I presented the Council's audited accounts, which reported General Fund Balances amounting to £8.709M.

- 2.2 Given the continuing financial pressures the Council is working under, it remains my view, that the Council should hold a minimum of £10M as General Fund Balances, (i.e. its working balance). This level is set given the context of the need for continued strong financial management that is felt to be essential to ensure that the Council maintains financial flexibility and stability going forward.
- 2.3 During the last financial year, 2019/20 our reserves were used to support our residents and businesses in the immediate aftermath of Storm Dennis. Whilst reducing our reserves below what I consider to be the minimum level, it was wholly appropriate that they were used in this way and for this purpose. I am satisfied that plans are in place to replenish General Fund Reserves to the minimum level over the period of our Medium Term Financial Plan (at £0.5M per year for the next 3 years).
- 2.4 Members will be aware that in addition to General Fund Reserves, the Council also holds a number of earmarked reserves that are kept under continuous review and are assessed each year by Audit Wales. Members will be aware that included in these Reserves is a Medium Term Financial Planning and Service Transformation Reserve that has successfully supported transitional funding as part of the Council's Medium Term Service Planning arrangements. It has achieved this through helping to smooth the delivery of budget savings over a number of years, whilst still allowing an annual balanced budget to be delivered. The starting point for the Medium Term Financial Planning and Service Transformation Reserve as at the 31st March 2020 is £3.563M. As part of our ongoing strategy, we have continued to identify and deliver savings in-year which means we have been able to increase the level of transitional funding available and the latest position is that this reserve has now increased to £4.330M (additional in year savings to date of £0.767M).
- 2.4 Audit Wales continue to emphasise that we must remain disciplined, if we are to maintain our long-term goal of driving forward continuous improvement of key services, though this becomes increasingly harder to achieve following a period of such severe financial pressures.
- 2.5 I believe the Audit Wales assessment is an accurate one and it is clear that Members continue to take their fiduciary duty extremely seriously as evidenced by the positive reports received from the regulators and the track record of budgetary control across services. The challenge, therefore, is to construct a prudent, equitable and fair revenue budget for the financial year ending the 31st March 2022. This must involve an approach which publicly demonstrates sound financial stewardship; which does not take unnecessary risks; which maximises income generation; continues to deliver (as far as possible, and where available) year on year efficiency savings and which delivers the services that are needed and we can afford, as well as protecting as many jobs as possible.

3.0 THE 2021/22 LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT

- 3.1 The timing of the Local Government Settlement for 2021/22 has been extremely uncertain throughout the Autumn period as a consequence of the timing of the UK Government Spending Review and the period it would cover, originally planned for 3 years but revised to one year.

3.2 On the 22nd December 2020, the Minister for Housing and Local Government (Julie James MS) announced the Provisional 2021/22 Local Government Settlement. The Minister's statement and key data table is attached at Appendix 3.

3.3 The "headlines" of the 2021/22 Provisional Settlement are as follows:-

- a. The overall increase in Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) funding for 2021/22 (of unhypothecated funding) at an all Wales level, after adjusting for transfers is 3.8% (+£172M).
- b. The settlement for Rhondda Cynon Taf, amounts to an increase of **3.8%** which equates to the average all Wales increase. Settlement figures across Wales range from 2.0% to 5.6%.
- c. No 'floor' protection has been included for 2021/22.
- d. The Settlement figures for 2021/22 include transfers into the settlement in respect of the Teachers Pay Grant (£3.981M) and the Coastal Risk Management Programme (not applicable to this Council). The value of the Teachers Pay Grant for this Council is £0.328M. Whilst the part year (2020/21) implications of the Teachers Pay Grant transfer into the settlement, the additional full year implications are to be funded from within the settlement increase.
- e. There is no indication of settlement levels beyond 2021/22.
- f. Provisional figures and indicative estimates are included for specific grants, at an all Wales level. Of particular note, would be the continuation and increase (from £40M to £50M) in the Social Care Workforce Grant. This funds our core base budget.
- g. The Council's General Capital Funding allocation has increased by £0.087M to £13.764M.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS OF THE 2021/22 PROVISIONAL SETTLEMENT

4.1 The provisional settlement indicates that our 2021/22 RSG and NDR funding will total £404.375M.

4.2 In anticipation of the 2021/22 local government settlement, the Council's service managers have constructed base budget requirements for next financial year. Those initial calculations provided for:-

- Estimated employee costs, pension costs and National Insurance Contribution levels;
- Non-pay (i.e. goods and services) inflation, including energy and fuel;
- Corporate financing requirements and levies; and
- Full year effects of any additional burdens imposed on the Council.

4.3 The Provisional Settlement is within the range modelled in the most recent Medium Term Financial Plan and recognises some of the intense funding pressures which are being experienced across local government in general but also within Rhondda Cynon Taf. **It also importantly recognises the critical**

role which local government continues to play in responding to the pandemic and protecting our communities and residents.

- 4.4 Members have continued to receive updates on the projections of the Council's revenue budget position for the period to 2023/24, as part of our Medium Term Service Planning arrangements. The latest of these assessments was considered by Council on the 21st October 2020 where, based on a range of modelled settlement levels, projected a funding gap of £9.9M (at +4% settlement), £13.8M (at +3% settlement) and £17.7M (at +2% settlement).
- 4.5 As referenced at section 3, the provisional settlement provides this Council with an uplift of 3.8%. There is also an increase in the Social Care Workforce Grant, which funds our core base budget.
- 4.6 Cabinet on the 17th November 2020 determined the Council Tax Base for 2021/22 at £77,197.81. The impact on the modelled budget gap of our updated tax base can also now be reflected.
- 4.7 The combined effects of the above updates is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1 : Revised Budget Gap at Provisional Settlement

	£'000
MTFP Budget Gap at 3%	13,809
Additional Resources at Provisional Settlement (including impact of updated Tax Base)	- 4,049
Additional Social Care Workforce Grant	- 675
Revised Budget Gap	9,085

- 4.8 Our base budget requirements for 2021/22 have continued to be reviewed since the preparation of the MTFP and a number of updates can now be made.
- 4.9 The UK Government Spending Review in November included a proposed pause of national public sector pay, an effective pay freeze for public sector staff with the exception of a pay increase of £250 per year for salary points below £24,000. Consequently, Welsh Government did not receive any further funding in this respect from UK Government. It is anticipated that the appropriate pay negotiating bodies and arrangements will comply with this, including with regard to teachers pay which is a devolved matter for Wales.
- 4.10 Our waste management costs have increased as a consequence of the impact the pandemic has had on residents and businesses. The overall quantum of waste has moved toward more kerbside residential collection, away from trade waste with a changed composition and an increase in the volume of residual waste.
- 4.11 Other base update requirements have also been made in respect of :
- Drainage Team
 - Children's Services - Additional Cost Pressures
 - Adult Social Care Costs
 - Additional Learning Needs
 - Other (including fleet / vehicle costs and community resilience)

4.12 These updates are summarised in table 2 below.

Table 2 : Base Budget Updates

	£'000
Public Sector Pay	- 7,861
Additional Waste Management and Disposal Costs	1,000
Drainage Team	500
Children's Services - Additional Cost Pressures	1,302
Adult Social Care Costs	1,048
Additional Learning Needs	500
Other	360
Total Base Updates	- 3,151

4.13 In the MTFP, a number of risk items were identified and estimated in financial terms. In light of the above updates it is now appropriate that these risks are removed from our base budget requirement for next year, albeit they will continue to be monitored as we go forward and continue to refresh our MTFP.

Table 3 : Risk Value to Remove

	£'000
Removal of Risk Items	- 1,877

4.14 The combined effects of the above updates on the budget gap are now shown in table 4.

Table 4 : Revised Budget Gap 2021/22

	£'000
Budget Gap at Provisional Settlement	9,085
Updated Base Budget Requirements	- 3,151
Removal of Budget Risks	- 1,877
Remaining Budget Gap	4,057

4.15 This reflects the position which was reported to Council on the 20th January 2021 and it is against this backdrop that we must consider our budget strategy for 2021/22.

5.0 DEVELOPING AN EQUITABLE, DELIVERABLE AND BALANCED BUDGET FOR 2021/22

5.1 Notwithstanding the relatively positive settlement from WG for 2021/22, it does follow a sustained period of real term reductions to our funding levels and more recently significant storm damage and the pandemic, and it is against this context that we need to develop a balanced budget for next year. There remain significant pressures upon many of our services together with a limited ability to increase Council Tax income, and a low tax base. Within these parameters, we will therefore need to take appropriate decisions to ensure that next year's

budget is equitable for all, does not compromise our financial stability and protects and develops our key services.

- 5.2 I touched upon the Council's overall financial position in Section 2 of the report. In my view, it is vital that we continue with the strategy we have adopted to date that takes account of the importance of sound financial management, including the level of General Fund balances and appropriate use of the "Medium Term Financial Planning and Service Transformation Reserve" as transitional funding, whilst targeting any available resources toward our high priority, customer-focused public services.
- 5.3 Every year, there are certain corporate financial provisions that must be "top sliced" locally, before service budgets can be allocated. Next year will be no different. There will be a requirement for:
- a) A provision to meet levies from External Bodies;
 - b) A provision for Capital Charges;
 - c) A provision for all other "Miscellaneous Finance" items (Audit Fees, Insurance Costs, Bank Charges, etc.) which are non-specific to any particular Service Group; and
 - d) Resources to fund the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- 5.4 As part of our updated budget requirement, appropriate sums have been set aside for these corporate financial requirements.
- 5.5 Additional costs and income losses which we have incurred during this financial year specifically and directly attributable to the pandemic have been funded by Welsh Government, via a claims based Hardship Fund. WG are committed to continuing this process into 2021/22 and accordingly our core base budget does not include provision for such additional costs.

6.0 COUNCIL TAX LEVELS

- 6.1 This Council has always acted reasonably when setting its Council Tax, balancing the impact upon services and the ability of the public to pay, recognising that those eligible will receive support through the Welsh Government's Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS). The original modelled proposal was to increase Council Tax in 2021/22 by 2.85%. This was consistent with the level of increase for last year 2020/21. It is now proposed that Council Tax be increased by **2.65%** for next year. This will increase the remaining budget gap by £0.182M.
- 6.2 Members will be aware that the costs of the CTRS impacts on the net income generated through any increase in Council Tax. A 1% increase in Council Tax will generate an additional income for the Council of £1.157M (at the 2021/22 tax base level), but will also cost £0.247M in additional CTRS requirements. It therefore follows that a 1% increase generates a net additional income of £0.910M, or stated another way, 21% of any Council Tax increase is lost to support the increased costs associated with the Welsh Government's CTRS.

7.0 SCHOOLS BUDGET (ISB)

- 7.1 Members have always viewed our schools as being a key priority and have ensured that they have been treated favourably in comparison with other council services.
- 7.2 The Schools Budget (ISB) is proposed to be increased to cover, in full, all inflationary and pupil number pressures, including NDR increased costs. Unlike other Council services there is no efficiency target or expectation albeit schools may need to take local action to absorb the financial implications of decisions taken locally.
- 7.3 In overall terms, the proposal sees the Schools Budget increase by £2.2M, from £161.6M to £163.8M. Schools are therefore fully funded for 2021/22.

8.0 EFFICIENCY

- 8.1 Council services have for many years now delivered against ambitious efficiency targets, making considerable budget reductions without adversely impacting on front line service provision.
- 8.2 As part of the current year's budget strategy, efficiencies of £6M were identified and delivered albeit it was noted that the ongoing sustainability of delivering efficiencies at this level would need to be considered.
- 8.3 The pandemic has clearly significantly impacted on our normal practises of considering our budget setting on a continuous basis, working across services in identifying efficiencies and budget reduction options and delivering on them early. The focus of our service managers has clearly and appropriately been prioritised on supporting and protecting our residents, businesses and communities.
- 8.4 Notwithstanding this however, our senior finance officers have continued to work alongside service managers and have again identified budget reduction measures which can be delivered without adversely impacting on our front-line services. Indeed, at as the quarter 2 performance report presented to Cabinet on the 17th November 2020, we were able to release £767k of in year base budget reductions.
- 8.5 Whilst at a slightly lower level than previous years, we have now identified efficiencies amounting to £4.6M which can be delivered and removed from next year's base budget requirement.

9.0 BUDGET STRATEGY PROPOSALS

- 9.1 This Council has taken a proactive approach to dealing with the budget pressures it continues to face including delivery of saving proposals early with a clear focus maintained across the medium term planning horizon. The Council has continued to deliver robust, balanced budgets and taken the opportunity to use our Medium Term Financial Planning and Service Transformation Reserve, as transition funding, to sensibly support the overall budget strategy. This approach is one which I would recommend is continued.

9.2 The Cabinet have always been focussed on protecting our front line services and have taken any opportunities to prioritise or reallocate resources to areas of priority.

9.3 For 2021/22, the following proposals are set out for Cabinet's consideration.

a. **NDR Local Relief Scheme**

Cabinet last year (13th February 2020) determined to implement a local Business Rate Reduction Scheme for 2020/21. The scheme supplemented the Welsh Government High Street and Retail Rate Relief Scheme by providing a further relief of £300 per qualifying business.

It is proposed that this local relief is continued for 2021/22 and increased to £350 per qualifying business.

The cost of this proposal is **£50k**.

b. **Car Park Charges**

Our town centres have been significantly impacted by the restrictions placed on retail, leisure and hospitality businesses plus the need to put in place measures to adhere with social distancing and enhanced cleaning and hygiene regimes. In order to encourage visitors to our town centres and to aid the recovery of our valued businesses, it is proposed that we tailor our car parking charges, noting that in all of our town centres other than Pontypridd and Aberdare, parking is already free.

The proposal is that car parking is free after 3pm on Monday to Fridays and free all day (after 10am) on Saturdays.

The cost of this proposal in terms of income foregone is **£160k**.

c. **Climate Change and Carbon Reduction**

The Council's commitment to responding to climate change and carbon reduction has already been well documented, with the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group having met regularly since its inaugural meeting in November 2019. The initial work programme set out in December 2019 has been delivered alongside an ambition to be further impactful and a community leader in this area, recognising the wider role that our residents, businesses and partners must play.

In order to support this work, it is proposed that a core base budget is put in place in order that a lead coordination role can be established along with a resource which can commission work from third parties to continue and, where possible increase the pace of our work in this area.

The cost of this proposal is **£100k**.

d. **Graduates**

Our graduate programme has already provided the opportunity for over 100 graduates to join the Council and develop and progress into middle and senior management roles. It is a key part of our workforce planning

strategy and service continuity arrangements, developing our own staff to meet the ongoing and changing needs across our services.

It is proposed that additional resources are set aside to enable a further 6 graduates to be appointed, over and above our existing commitment.

The cost of the proposal is **£200k**.

e. **Well-Being Support**

The performance and commitment of our staff resources has been exemplary during this period across all of our service areas, demonstrating an outstanding attitude to public service and to the well being of our residents, businesses and communities. This has been set against the backdrop of significant personal challenge for them themselves in terms of the restrictions placed on them and their families and the circumstances in which they have had to perform their responsibilities.

Our staff are without doubt our most valued asset – they are the front face of the Council and represent and uphold our key values as public servants. We recognise the challenges faced by staff and have ensured that we continue to support their welfare and wellbeing. The additional resource proposed will enable us to expand upon the current support programmes we have in place and further develop these programmes across the workforce.

The cost of the proposal is **£50k**.

f. **Fees and Charges**

A final report on the proposed level of Fees & Charges for 2021/22 will be presented to Cabinet in February 2021. Following the initial (Phase 1) consultation exercise undertaken during November and December, the Cabinet's draft proposals with regard to fees and charges would see a standard increase of 1.7% (CPI), with a number of specific exceptions :

Area of Charge	Proposed Exception
Leisure for Life	Freeze
Car Park Charges	Freeze
Summer and Winter Playing Fees (sports clubs)	Freeze
Meals on Wheels / Day Centre Meals	10p per meal and then frozen until 2023
School Meals	Freeze (as per decision taken in 2020/21 to hold prices until April 2023)
Bereavement Fees	Freeze
Lido / Rhondda Heritage Park	Freeze

The impact of these draft proposals would cost **£185k**.

g. Public Health and Protection Services – Additional Resources

The Public Health and Protection service has played a key role this year in ensuring the public health and wellbeing of our communities, providing advice and guidance and leading on initiatives such as the Test Trace Protect programme.

The additional investment proposed in the service will enable additional resources to be employed, further strengthening the team and providing future resilience for the service.

The cost of the proposal is **£200k**.

h. Flood Prevention Support

Our communities continue to recover from the exceptional storm events during last winter, including Storm Dennis. Significant recovery work is ongoing across the County Borough to the infrastructure damaged.

Over 1,000 homes and 400 businesses were flooded during Storm Dennis. It is proposed that alongside all other support being provided, that an advisory role is put in place to ensure that our residents and businesses are supported in protecting themselves as far as possible from any storm damage, including for example insurance availability and physical property protection opportunities.

The cost of this proposal is **£50k**.

i. Overgrowth Team

Our local environment remains a key priority of the Council, keeping our physical places clean, removing eyesores and ensuring that our natural resources are appropriately maintained. We already have a number of teams who are responsible for ensuring that our overgrowth is effectively maintained and it is proposed that an additional team is put in place to further enhance this work.

The cost of this proposal is **£75k**.

- 9.4 The implications of the above strategy proposals, including the proposed level of Council Tax increase (para 6) and the delivery of efficiencies (para 8), on the remaining budget gap position is shown in table 5 below.

Table 5 : Budget Strategy Proposals 2021/22

	£'000	£'000
Remaining Budget Gap		4,057
Council Tax at 2.65%	182	
Efficiencies	- 4,600	
NDR Discretionary Relief	50	
Fees and Charges	185	
Car Park Charges	160	
Climate Change and Carbon Reduction	100	
Graduates	200	
Well being Support	50	
Public Health and Protection - Additional Resources	200	
Flood Prevention Support	50	
Overgrowth Team	75	- 3,348
Remaining Budget Gap		709

9.5 *Medium Term Financial Planning and Service Transformation Reserve (Transitional Funding)* – We have for many years used our transition funding reserve sensibly as part of our balanced budget strategy, at a level which does not compromise the robustness of our budget and which can be replenished with some certainty, given our ongoing strategy of delivering savings early.

9.6 As previously referenced the reserve currently stands at £4.330M, having been replenished during this year (2020/21) by £0.767M to quarter 2. Accordingly, to address the remaining budget gap, it is proposed that an allocation of £0.709M is made from this reserve for 2021/22. This would facilitate a balanced budget for 2021/22 and would leave £3.621M in the reserve (subject to the year-end assessment of reserves). I am confident that processes are now sufficiently well embedded to ensure that savings are achieved in-year and that this reserve can continue to be replenished.

	£'000
Remaining Budget Gap	709
Use of Transition Funding	- 709
Remaining Budget Gap	-

9.7 The above provides a robust and balanced budget strategy which can be recommended to Cabinet and Council.

10.0 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLANNING

10.1 Whilst the focus for this report is necessarily on 2021/22, the pressures on our services and the absence of any firm indications of future settlement levels means that our Medium Term Financial and Service Planning arrangements remain key to ensuring that financial stability is maintained as the cornerstone of our overall financial health as a Council.

10.2 Medium Term Service Planning remains extremely challenging in the absence of any indication or certainty of ongoing funding levels and it will be critical that we maintain our flexibility to respond accordingly to annual settlement levels within the context of our own medium term planning arrangements.

- 10.3 The delivery of efficiency savings early and as part of our medium term planning has positioned us extremely well in our ability to respond to funding challenges and uncertainties and continues to contribute to the delivery of a lean, efficient and effective organisation.
- 10.4 The future quantum of such savings however must be considered and reflected upon in light of what has been delivered to date (£100M over the last 10 years) and what can reasonably continue to be delivered without impacting on our front line services and having an unintended consequence elsewhere.

11.0 SERVICE PRIORITIES

- 11.1 Even within a period of significantly reducing resources and hence financial pressure on all services, this Council remains committed as far as it possibly can to continue to deliver its key services, stronger communities and social justice. The Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024 sets out that our key purpose is to provide strong community leadership and create the environment for people and businesses to be independent, healthy and prosperous.
- 11.2 The Senior Leadership Team have had due regard to the plan in formulating the proposals set out in this report.
- 11.3 In addition to our revenue base budget requirements, opportunities also continue to be taken to deliver investment in key strategic areas through one off funding made available via a risk based review of earmarked reserves and through identification of in-year savings opportunities. The Council has already invested over £107M (over and above the normal Capital Programme) in areas supporting key Corporate Plan priorities since October 2015, the latest investment (£11.8M) being agreed by Council in March 2020.
- 11.4 A report setting out the updated capital programme for 2021/22 to 2023/24 will be reported for Members consideration shortly.

12.0 2021/22 SERVICE GROUP BUDGETS

- 12.1 The Council adopts a comprehensive budget challenge process involving finance officers and senior managers from each Service area, with a subsequent detailed review and assessment being conducted by the Senior Leadership Team, to ensure consistency and fairness across all service areas.
- 12.2 The 2020/21 revenue budget and the regular performance monitoring reports are available to the Cabinet, to act as a benchmark to evaluate service delivery options, priorities and savings proposals. It is, of course, important to note that the current year's figures are for information purposes only and are not meant to represent a base service requirement, or target. Indeed, budget provision for next year could be more, or less, than the 2020/21 levels, depending upon Members' decisions and spending priorities, and following the impact of the 2021/22 local government settlement.
- 12.3 All of our services have recently completed service recovery plans that have set out key actions for their recovery from the pandemic, locking in transformation and new service delivery models where appropriate. Funding

will be a key consideration for these plans and the Senior Leadership Team's budget proposals are intended to underpin these actions. This will allow the budget to be built "bottom up", on the basis of properly identified service need, within the framework provided by the Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan and our own Corporate Plan.

- 12.4 Members will, of course, be keen to demonstrate that the Council is properly discharging all its statutory obligations, but with funding at a premium, will also wish to ensure that our services are being delivered in the most economic, efficient and effective manner. The basic principle which should, therefore, underpin the construction of the 2021/22 budget, is that Members will look to target adequate funding towards the delivery of our key services whilst, at the same time, ensuring that the resultant Council Tax levied next year is reasonable and can be justified to our residents. Attached at Appendix 4 is an outline budget proposal, including efficiency and service funding requirements. This is based on a Council Tax increase of 2.65%.

13.0 THE 2021/22 GENERAL BUDGET STRATEGY CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 13.1 As in previous years, the Council has been keen to consult with the public and other interested stakeholders on its general budget strategy and how services are delivered.

- 13.2 The proposed approach to budget consultation for 2021/22 is set out in the Cabinet report dated 13th October 2020. It comprises 2 phases as follows:

Phase 1 - provided residents and stakeholders with the opportunity to feedback their views on some of the key strategic building blocks used to construct the Council's budget.

Phase 2 - once Cabinet have agreed a draft budget strategy, and in light of the provisional local government settlement, then this draft strategy will itself be consulted upon as part of Phase 2.

- 13.3 The Phase 1 Consultation report has been available to support the preparation of these proposals, and is attached at Appendix 5.

- 13.4 The general budget consultation also incorporated the requirements to consult on discretions available locally for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (which has been used to inform the Council's decision on its scheme for 2021/22 as considered by Council on the 20th January 2021).

- 13.5 In addition, specific consultation activity was undertaken with the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee and the School Budget Forum the minutes of which are attached at Appendix 6 and Appendix 7 respectively.

14.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 14.1 On the 22nd December 2020, the Minister for Housing and Local Government (Julie James MS) announced the Provisional 2021/22 Local Government Settlement which showed this Council's increase in resources was set at 3.8%.

- 14.2 Whilst the Council's overall financial position remains sound, its level of General Fund Balances are not excessive. The Council must, therefore, retain its focus on restoring 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. As detailed in the report, the use of such transitional funding would produce a balanced budget for 2021/22.
- 14.3 This Council has continued to deliver year on year robust and balanced budgets alongside an investment programme supporting key priorities. The challenge remains however, for positive and proactive management from the Senior Leadership Team and clear direction from Cabinet to produce a financially sustainable budget into the medium term in what continues to be an extremely challenging and uncertain financial climate.

BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK PROCEDURE RULES

1. The Framework for Executive Decisions

The Council will be responsible for the adoption of its policy framework and budget as set out in Article 4. The policy framework and budget adopted by the Council will be based on that proposed by the Executive. Once a budget or a policy framework is in place, it will be the responsibility of the Executive to implement it.

2. Process for Developing the Framework

(a) The Cabinet, following detailed reports from respective Chief Officers, (following appropriate consultation with stakeholders) will present to Council, proposed plans, policies and the associated annual budgets. This will be done allowing adequate time for Council to deal with the matter and, if needed, refer the matter back to the Executive for further consideration.

(b) The Council will consider the proposals of the Cabinet and may adopt them, amend them, refer them back to the Cabinet for further consideration, or substitute its own proposals in their place. In considering the matter, the Council shall have before it the Executive's proposals and any related report from the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee. Any amendments to the proposals of the Cabinet to be proposed by Members at Council may not be considered by Council unless notice of the proposed amendment has been given in writing, by fax or via e-mail (with the names of the Proposer and Seconder clearly stated) to the Proper Officer and signed by the Proposer not later than 5:00pm at least 8 clear working days (not including the date of the meeting) before the date of the Council meeting.

(c) Any proposed amendment by a Member of the Council to the proposals of the Cabinet and made in accordance with paragraph 2 (b) above shall only be accepted and submitted to full Council for consideration if in the opinion of the Proper Officer (in consultation with advice sought from the Monitoring Officer and s151 Officer) it is deemed to be legal and within the competence of the Council.

(d) The Council's decision will be publicised and a copy shall be given to the Leader. The notice of decision shall be dated and shall state either that the decision shall be effective immediately (if the Council accepts the Cabinet's proposals without amendment) or (if the Cabinet's proposals are not accepted without amendment), that the Council's decision will become effective on the expiry of 5 working days after the publication of the notice of decision, unless the Leader objects to it in that period.

(e) If the Leader objects to the decision of the Council, he/she shall give written notice to the Chief Executive to that effect, prior to the date upon which the decision is to be effective. The written notification must state the reasons for the objection.

Where such notification is received, the Chief Executive shall convene a further meeting of the Council to reconsider its decision and the decision shall not be effective pending that meeting.

(f) The Council meeting must take place within 21 working days of the receipt of the Leader's written objection. At that Council meeting, the decision of the Council shall be reconsidered in the light of the objection, which shall be available in writing for the Council.

(g) The Council shall, at that meeting, make its final decision on the matter on the basis of a simple majority. The decision shall be made public in accordance with Article 4 and shall be implemented immediately.

(h) All policy and budget reports presented to Council for decision shall subsequently be presented to the next calendar Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee.

2021/22 BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING TIMETABLE

13th October 2020

Cabinet

- Consider the Council's updated Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 to 2023/24
- Consider the approach to Budget Consultation for 2021/22

26th October to 7th December 2020 (6 Weeks)

Consultation (Phase 1) – Budget Consultation Phase 1 (including Council Tax Reduction Scheme)

22nd December 2020

Provisional Local Government Settlement - Receipt of provisional settlement figures further to WG Budget on the 21st December

20th January 2021

Council Meeting – Report on the Implications of the Provisional Settlement

28th January 2021

Cabinet Meeting – Consideration of draft Senior Leadership Team budget strategy options and for Cabinet to formulate their draft budget strategy, taking into account feedback from Phase 1 of the Budget Consultation process

29th January 2021 to 12th February 2021

Consultation (Phase 2) – Consultation on the Cabinet's draft budget strategy

25th February 2021

Cabinet Meeting – To consider the feedback from the Phase 2 Consultation and to agree the Cabinet's final budget strategy for recommending to Council

2nd March 2021

Final Local Government Settlement – Receipt of final settlement figures

10th March 2021

Council Meeting – Cabinet to submit its 2021/22 Budget Strategy and Council Tax levels to Council

Council Decision :

- Approve the 2021/22 Revenue Budget

- Approve the 2021/22 Council Tax (including necessary formal Council Tax Resolution)



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Provisional Local Government Settlement 2021-22**

DATE **22 December 2020**

BY **Julie James MS, Minister for Housing and Local Government**

Today I am publishing details of the core funding allocations for unitary authorities for the forthcoming financial year through the Provisional Local Government Revenue and Capital Settlements for 2021-22 (the Settlement).

Adjusting for transfers, the core revenue funding for local government in 2021-22 will increase by 3.8% on a like-for-like basis compared to the current year. In 2021-22, local authorities will receive £4.65 billion from the Welsh Government in core revenue funding and non-domestic rates to spend on delivering key services.

In addition to this, I am publishing information on revenue and capital grants planned for 2021-22. These amount to nearly £1 billion for revenue and over £720 million for capital. The Government is providing these indicative grant values and distributions now so that local authorities are able to plan their budgets efficiently. This information will be further updated for the final settlement.

As set out in yesterday's draft budget the Welsh Government's funding priorities continue to be health and local government services. While I know local government has been facing significant pressures, particularly arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, I hope that this increase, building as it does on a significantly improved settlement in 2020-21, enables Authorities to continue to support and deliver critical and valued local services. In setting the overall Settlement at this level the Government has responded to the negative impact of the pandemic on Non Domestic Rate (NDR) collection. The baseline Settlement increase of £176m reflects a larger increase in the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) to compensate for the fall in NDR. It also accounts for the impact of freezing the NDR multiplier. After adjusting for transfers into the Settlement, this equates to an increase of £172 million in Settlement funding, compared with 2020-21.

The Minister for Finance and Trefnydd was clear in the draft budget that one of the hard choices we have faced in setting our spending plans for next year is our approach to public sector pay. The reality is that we did not receive any additional funding through the Barnett

formula to provide for public sector wide pay awards next year given the UK Government's decision to pause public sector pay rises, with the exception of the NHS and those on the lowest wages. The implications of pay awards in 2021-22 will therefore need to be accommodated within Authorities' budget planning in the light of this Settlement. Our decisions in the budget, target as much support as we can to health and local government to support pressure in frontline services focusing on schools and social services.

Whilst we did not receive any additional funding from the UK Government for public sector pay, in determining the distribution of funding across authorities for the Settlement, we have recognised the decisions made on the 2020/21 teachers' pay deal and the commitment made by local government to fund this deal by directing funding into the schools part of the formula. We are also continuing to provide funding for our proposals for new eligibility criteria for free school meals, given the continued rollout of Universal Credit by the UK Government.

Through this Settlement, we are continuing to provide £4.8 million for authorities to deliver additional discretionary rates relief for local businesses and other ratepayers to respond to specific local issues.

In line with the Government's focus on countering the effects of poverty, we remain committed to protecting vulnerable and low-income households from any reduction in support under the Council Tax Reduction Schemes, despite the shortfall in the funding transferred by the UK Government following its abolition of Council Tax Benefit. We will continue to maintain full entitlements under our Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for 2021-22 and are again providing £244 million for CTRS in the Settlement in recognition of this.

Alongside the Settlement we are continuing to provide funding to support local government to waive fees for child burials. This shared commitment ensures a fair and consistent approach across Wales.

I am not minded to provide for a funding floor for this year given the increased settlement for 2020-21 and the proposed allocations I am announcing today for 2021-22. I have accordingly allocated all the funding available up front.

A wide range of services of course have been significantly impacted by the pandemic. As the Finance Minister's statement on the budget made clear, we recognise the need to continue to provide funding to support Local Government's response to the pandemic. This will be considered separately and does not form part of this Settlement.

This Settlement provides Local Authorities with a stable platform for planning their budgets for the forthcoming financial year. I fully appreciate the pressures local government is facing and am committed to protecting local government, particularly at this difficult and challenging time. This is as good a Settlement as the Government can offer and one which should help to alleviate some of the pressures Authorities are anticipating. While I can't guarantee that there will be no changes between the provisional and final settlements, due to the financial uncertainty that we currently face, I do not intend making any significant changes to the methodology or the data underpinning the distribution of this Settlement.

Attached to this statement is a summary table setting out the Settlement allocations by authority. The allocations are derived using the formula agreed with local government. As a result of the formula and related data, the table shows the range of the funding allocations, from a 2.0% increase over the 2020-21 settlement to a 5.6% increase.

Further details on the Settlement will be sent to all local authorities and published on the Welsh Government's website:

<https://gov.wales/local-government-revenue-and-capital-settlement-2021-2022>

General capital funding for 2021-22 will continue to be set at £198 million. Included within this amount is £20 million for the continuation of the public highways refurbishment grant, including support for active travel; £54 million of historic baselined general capital grant; and the continuation of an additional £35 million of general capital grant, which was announced as part of the 2019-20 and 2020-21 budgets. This additional £35 million will enable Authorities to begin to respond to our joint priority of decarbonisation, including for housing and economic recovery following Covid-19.

We have discussed, before, our shared recognition of the need to invest in the supply of housing. Investing in social housing should minimise the pressures on local authority budgets and on homelessness services. Investment in housing can also support the Welsh economy and local economies. I hope that this Settlement, capital and revenue, can support Authorities in increasing the scale and pace of housebuilding across Wales.

I know that Authorities will need to make choices in setting their budgets. They will need to engage meaningfully with their local communities as they consider their budget priorities. The setting of budgets, and in turn council tax, is the responsibility of each local authority and authorities will need to take account of the full range of sources of funding available to them, as well as the pressures they face, in setting their budgets for the coming year.

This announcement commences the formal seven-week consultation on the provisional local government settlement. This will end on 9 February 2021.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Senedd returns I would be happy to do so.

Summary Table

2021-22 provisional settlement – comparison of 2020-21 AEF (adjusted for transfers) and 2021-22 provisional AEF, and distribution of the 2020-21 Council Tax Reduction Schemes funding (distributed within AEF) (£000s)

Unitary authority	2020-21 adjusted AEF ¹	2021-22 provisional AEF	% change on adjusted 2020-21 AEF	Rank	Council Tax Reduction Schemes (within AEF)
Isle of Anglesey	101,369	104,825	3.4%	18	5,186
Gwynedd	188,409	194,793	3.4%	19	8,541
Conwy	161,181	166,906	3.6%	17	9,138
Denbighshire	153,089	158,632	3.6%	16	8,920
Flintshire	199,267	206,778	3.8%	14	9,609
Wrexham	184,569	188,856	2.3%	21	9,062
Powys	184,554	191,897	4.0%	8	8,775
Ceredigion	107,545	109,658	2.0%	22	5,122
Pembrokeshire	172,502	179,387	4.0%	7	8,187
Carmarthenshire	274,355	284,820	3.8%	13	13,996
Swansea	339,445	352,642	3.9%	10	19,264
Neath Port Talbot	227,198	236,680	4.2%	6	15,977
Bridgend	203,540	212,192	4.3%	5	13,088
The Vale Of Glamorgan	160,455	168,316	4.9%	2	9,062
Rhondda Cynon Taf	389,403	404,375	3.8%	11	21,936
Merthyr Tydfil	96,973	101,476	4.6%	3	5,595
Caerphilly	283,708	292,367	3.1%	20	12,372
Blaenau Gwent	116,112	120,361	3.7%	15	8,067
Torfaen	140,308	146,340	4.3%	4	8,331
Monmouthshire	97,673	101,483	3.9%	9	5,753
Newport	228,000	240,796	5.6%	1	10,083
Cardiff	469,913	487,913	3.8%	12	27,934
All Unitary Authorities	4,479,570	4,651,494	3.8%		244,000

Note: Total may not sum correctly due to rounding

1. 2020-21 AEF adjusted transfers of £5.127m (at 2020-21 prices) into the Settlement

AVAILABLE REVENUE RESOURCES 2021/22 AND PROPOSED USAGE

	£'000
Total resources available in 2021/22	527,901
LESS: Total resources available in 2020/21	508,747
<u>INCREASE</u> in resources available in 2021/22	19,154

	£'000
Allocation of Resources	
Delegated Schools Budget	2,206
Education & Inclusion Services	1,359
Community & Children's Services	8,689
Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services	5,027
Chief Executive	(230)
Authority Wide Requirements	2,103
	19,154

PROPOSED REVENUE BUDGET 2021/22

Education & Inclusion Services

Delegated Schools Budgets

	£'000
Net Revenue Budget 2020/21	161,578
Increase	2,206
Proposed Net Revenue Budget 2021/22	163,784

Non Delegated Budgets

	£'000
Net Revenue Budget 2020/21	31,049
Base and Inflationary Pressures	2,270
General Efficiencies	(911)
Proposed Net Revenue Budget 2021/22	32,408

Total Net Revenue Budget 2021/22	196,192
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Community & Children's Services

	£'000
Net Revenue Budget 2020/21	162,681
Base and Inflationary Pressures	10,995
General Efficiencies	(2,306)
Proposed Net Revenue Budget 2021/22	171,370

Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services

	£'000
Net Revenue Budget 2020/21	55,928
Base and Inflationary Pressures	5,564
General Efficiencies	(537)
Proposed Net Revenue Budget 2021/22	60,955

Chief Executive

	£'000
Net Revenue Budget 2020/21	27,039
Base and Inflationary Pressures	616
General Efficiencies	(846)
Proposed Net Revenue Budget 2021/22	26,809

Authority Wide

	£'000
Net Revenue Budget 2020/21	70,472
Increase	2,103
Proposed Net Revenue Budget 2021/22	72,575

Use of Reserves (Transition Funding)	(709)
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Budget Consultation 2021/22

(Phase 1)

*Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough
Council*

December 2020



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This section provides a summary of the main findings from the Phase 1 Budget Consultation 2021/22.
- The consultation was conducted in-house using a digital by default approach, supplemented by off-line alternatives. Phase 1 of the consultation started on the 26th October and ended on the 7th December 2020.
- 1,044 online survey responses were received.
- The majority of respondents felt that the Council should protect services at their current level through a 2.85% increase in Council Tax (76.8%).
- Respondents were also asked what their preferred level of Council Tax increase for next year would be. The results show that the majority of respondents (59%) would prefer a 2.85% increase (the current modelled level), with 24.4% stating less than 2.85%.
- 81.5% of respondents agreed that the Council should provide sufficient resources to fully cover increased pay and non-pay cost pressures in our schools.
- Respondents were asked to state which services they would want to protect from an increase in fees and charges in 2021/22. The majority (i.e. 50% or more) of respondents felt that fees and charges for the following services should be frozen (no increase);
 - Bereavement Fees (60.7%);
 - Meals on Wheels and Day Centre Meals (58.8%);
 - Car Parking Charges (57.5%); and
 - Adult Social Care Charges (non-residential care services) (55.2%).
- Respondents were provided with a list of Council services and asked to choose which services they felt should be protected and prioritised for any additional resources in 2021/22. The top 3 services that respondents wanted to protect and prioritise were;
 - Children's Social Care Services (95.5%);
 - Schools (92.1%); and
 - Public Health (91.9%);
- 94% of respondents agreed with the Council's approach to efficiencies and 93.6% said that we should continue to expect our managers to deliver more efficient services.
- 82.6% of respondents stated that the Council should continue with its strategy on reserves.

- Respondents were asked if they thought the Council should invest in a number of service areas. The majority of respondents agreed that the Council should invest in all of the areas suggested, with the most support for investment in Flood Alleviation (93.8%).
- A virtual engagement session was held with members of the OPAG (Older Persons Advisory Group) and Disability Forum. Comments are found in section 5 of the report.
- The Council's Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee and the School Budget Forum were consulted (the minutes of which have not been included in this report) and engagement took place with the Community Liaison Committee.
- We held 5 virtual sessions and spoke to pupils from St John Baptist Church In Wales High School, Aberdare Community School, Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and Y Pant Comprehensive School. We also engaged with learners from Coleg Y Cymoedd in Aberdare, Rhondda and Treforest campuses. The results of these engagements are included in section 6 of the report.
- Over 1,100 people were engaged in the phase 1 budget consultation process.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the Phase 1 Budget Consultation 2021/22.
- 1.2 Section 2 outlines some brief background to the consultation process.
- 1.3 Section 3 details the methodology.
- 1.4 Section 4 provides the results of the online questionnaire.
- 1.5 Section 5 presents the feedback received via virtual meetings, including the Older Persons Advisory Group and Disability Forum.
- 1.6 Section 6 provides feedback on the young persons' virtual engagement events.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council undertakes a comprehensive approach to its annual budget consultation, involving a large number of residents and key stakeholders.
- 2.2 The widespread approach we use and the range of views we capture provides senior managers and Cabinet Members with the necessary information they need to set the budget for the year ahead. In addition, we have found that the vast amount of information we collect can also be valuable for service managers to use for their service planning and development.
- 2.3 The comprehensive approach undertaken in the last few years has led to increased engagement in the budget consultation process through a more interactive and varied approach.
- 2.4 The current COVID-19 pandemic brings challenges for public engagement and consultation, where in Rhondda Cynon Taf we have developed a very successful face to face approach with residents and other stakeholders in recent years.
- 2.5 The approach we have used this year aims to continue the positive work by ensuring that all residents and service users have every opportunity to provide feedback. The 2021/22 budget consultation took on a 'digital by default' approach, whilst continuing to consider hard to reach groups, those having reduced or no access to the Internet and those who prefer to engage through traditional methods.
- 2.6 This report presents the findings of phase 1 of the budget consultation, where views were sought on:
- The level of Council Tax increase;
 - The resources allocated to our schools;
 - Fees and charges;
 - Protection and prioritisation of services for additional resources;
 - Delivering more efficient services;
 - Council priorities, investment opportunities and Council reserves
 - The Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- 2.7 Phase 1 of the consultation started on the 26th October and ended on the 7th December 2020.
- 2.8 Phase 2 of the consultation will commence in January 2021 and will seek to obtain views on the proposed Budget Strategy for 2021/22.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The 'digital by default' approach included the following methods to consult with a range of stakeholders:

- An online survey to collect responses on key issues, such as Council investment areas, Council Tax levels and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- The use of social media to communicate the key messages to residents and service users, and encourage engagement and feedback regarding the Council's budget and investment areas.
- Emails distributed to all key stakeholders (including the Council's Citizens' Panel, Councillors, Council staff and schools within Rhondda Cynon Taf).
- The option to attend Public Zoom meetings.
- Online zoom seminars with young people in Schools and Colleges.
- An online Disability Forum Meeting.
- An online Older Persons Advisory Group Meeting.
- Online meetings with the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee and the School Budget Forum.
- Online meeting with the Community Liaison Committee.

3.2 As listed above, to replace our usual face to face engagement, we provided the option of virtual meetings to outline the budget approach, answer questions and collect views. These online (Zoom) events used a video presentation for the first time - https://youtu.be/X_DAVVIVDfY The video was then followed by a discussion with online attendees.

3.3 We provided a number of alternatives to online engagement, as it is important to continue to consider hard to reach groups, those having reduced or no access to the Internet and those who prefer to engage through traditional methods. This included:

- A telephone consultation option working with the Council's Contact Centre. The Contact Centre number was made available for people to discuss their views or as a minimum to request consultation materials.
- Individual call backs were offered if required.
- Paper surveys and information available on request.
- Consultation freepost address for postal responses.

3.4 We designed an Easy Read/Plan English Document in paper format and online, to simplify some of the consultation materials.

3.5 Over 1,100 people were engaged in the phase 1 budget consultation.

4 Questionnaire Results

- 4.1 The following section outlines the results from the budget questionnaire, which received 1,044 online responses. A selection of comments are provided and the full list of comments will be provided to Cabinet and senior officers to assist with decision making.

Council Tax

- 4.2 The majority of respondents felt that the Council should protect services at their current level through a 2.85% increase in Council Tax (76.8%).

Table 1: Council Tax preference

	%
Do you think the Council should.....	
Protect Council services at their current level through a 2.85% increase in Council Tax	76.8
Reduce service levels to close any budget gap and keep any increase in Council Tax to a minimum	23.2

- 4.3 Those who agreed with the 2.85% modelled increase to protect services felt it was important to keep services at their current level and the Council should not cut services. A selection of comments fed back were:

“Council tax rise under 3% in RCT is manageable, some councils doing over 5% is wholly unacceptable”

“2.85% is a decent increase personally thinking and maybe even an increase of 3% would still mean RCT is below the average increase in Wales.”

“I would rather pay a small amount more and protect services. The increases in RCT over recent years seem to be small and sensible so I’d support a small increase this year”

“As an RCT resident, I think a 2.85% increase is not too much to ask, if it means that more money goes towards the services that are vital to todays pandemic society.”

“Happy to agree 2.85% as that’s less the 75p a week extra for my household”

Of those who did not agree with an increase of 2.85% the main reason was affordability. Feedback included:

“2020 has been a hard year for many reasons, with many people losing employment. A large increase on ctax would seem unfair due to the current circumstances. Increase the following financial year to give people/Country a chance to recover”

“At the current time and given job uncertainty, especially in the private sector. Any increases in council tax should be kept to a minimum.”

4.4 Respondents were also asked what their preferred level of Council Tax increase for next year would be. The results show that the majority of respondents (59%) would prefer a 2.85% increase (the current modelled level), with 24.4% stating less than 2.85%, 11.2% suggesting an increase of more than 3% and 5.3% indicating more than 4%.

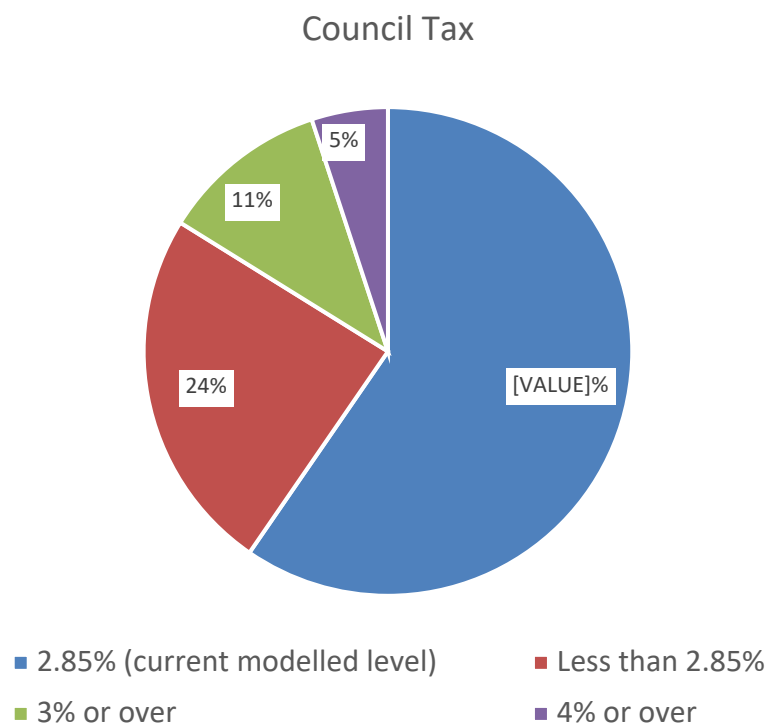


Figure 1 - Preferred level of Council Tax increase

Note: The figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Schools Budget

- 4.5 81.5% of respondents agreed that the Council should provide sufficient resources to fully cover increased pay and non-pay cost pressures in our schools.

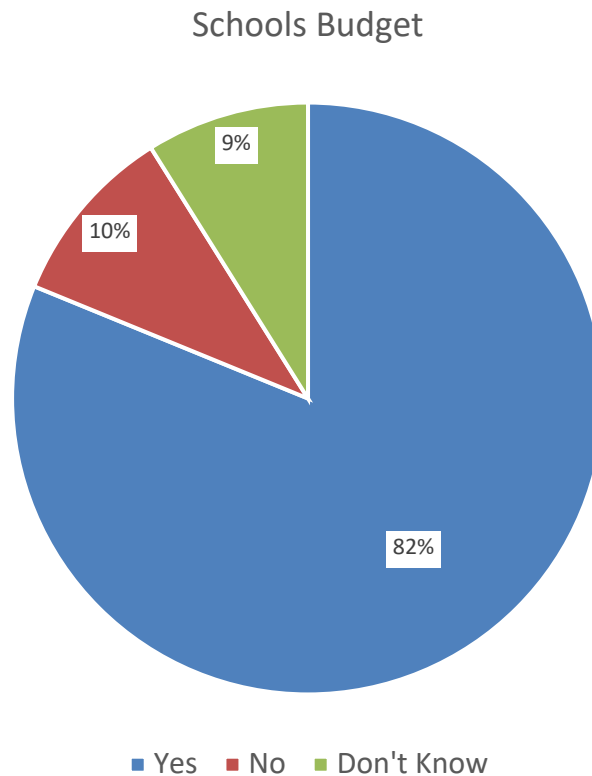


Figure 2 - Agreement with Schools Budget increase

Note: The figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Fees and Charges

- 4.6 Respondents were asked their views on fees and charges levels for 2021/22, based on the modelled assumption that they would be increased by 1.7% (i.e. the Consumer Price Index (CPI)). Table 2 shows the results.

Table 2: Fees and charges levels

Analysis % Respondents			
	CPI (increase (1.7%))	Higher than CPI (higher than 1.7% increase)	Freeze (no increase)
Leisure Centre Pay and Play	48.1	9.5	42.4
Summer and Winter Playing Fees (Sports Clubs)	41.4	10.9	47.7
Car Parking Charges	31.0	11.5	57.5
Cinema (entrance fee)	50.8	19.0	30.2
Pontypridd Lido (entry for adult users)	52.0	21.1	27.0
Rhondda Heritage park	57.5	16.5	26.0
Meals on Wheels and Day Centre Meals	32.6	8.9	58.8
Adult Social Care Charges (non-residential care services)	36.1	8.7	55.2
Bereavement Fees	33.5	5.8	60.7
Fixed Penalty Notice (for environmental crimes e.g., Fly Tipping)	15.8	77.7	6.5

Note: The figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

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

- Car Parking Charges (57.5%);
- Meals on Wheels and Day Centre Meals (58.8%);
- Adult Social Care Charges (non-residential care services) (55.2%); and
- Bereavement Fees (60.7%).

Those services with a majority supporting an increase at 1.7% (i.e. the CPI level) were;

- Cinema (entrance fee) (50.8%);
- Pontypridd Lido (52.0%); and
- Rhondda Heritage Park (57.5%).

It is worth noting that 77.7% of respondents suggested an increase higher than the CPI for fixed penalty notices, with only 6.5% suggesting a freeze.

- 4.8 A selection of comments provided by respondents on fees and charges levels are provided below, noting that a number of comments refer to the on-going Coronavirus pandemic as a factor.

Overall

“Any service or provision that is entertainment related should be subject to rate of inflation.”

“Due to pandemic some of these have not been accessible so to increase the cost would be another financial burden for the communities”

“Due to the impact of lockdown and many people having reduced hours in work etc, it hardly seems appropriate to increase entry fees and parking charges”.

Leisure

“After the awful time everyone has had leisure needs to be kept affordable”

“I think supporting leisure centres and sports activities is extremely important next year. It is so important for mental health”

“leisure and sports clubs as well as cinemas are struggling in the pandemic and I believe that extra charges for currently reduced services would be detrimental to the services they provide”

Summer and Winter Playing Fees (Sports Clubs)

“I think it has already been a very difficult year for sports clubs where they have been unable to raise money due to C-19.”

“Summer and winter playing fees should be increased however, more funding should be found for improved facilities to enhance participation which in turn improves wellbeing and health across the County.”

“With the current pandemic, sports and leisure centres are the only places some people are leaving the house for, and it supports health and wellbeing, increasing prices at the moment may cause a wider issue where people can't afford to use the facilities and aren't leaving the home, in addition to working from home people may become more isolated.”

Car Parking Charges

“Car parking ensures local towns are utilised to support local business, raising the fees will stop people using the towns ...”

“Car parking should be frozen to support businesses on the high street to recover after the pandemic.”

“Car park charges impact town centre viability - need to promote other modes but public transport difficult during C19”

Cinema

“I think it is fair to increase the prices of optional leisure services i.e., cinema”

“Cinema, Heritage park are luxuries so should increase above CPI”

“Where services are purely for leisure, eg, optional, such as cinema or leisure centre pay and play, they could be increased.”

Pontypridd Lido

“the lido... however things that benefit health and wellbeing should be frozen.”

“There are some things that I agree with raising the cost such as the lido, if this is for adults only as this help raise money after the damage caused by the floods earlier in the year.”

“As an adult with no children I feel it would be unfair for me to have to pay more to use the lido to further subsidise free access to children when many families earn more than me”

Rhondda Heritage Park

“The heritage park should also see an increase in fees paid by visitors.”

“The Heritage Park is a museum and to keep people going there the cost must be affordable. An increase in price will put people off.”

Meals on Wheels

“Meals on Wheels and Day Centre meals should be frozen so that the most vulnerable can continue to enjoy a warm cooked meal.”

“Meals on wheels have been critical for many and I think increasing their fee would not be fair since they have no other means to get what they need.”

“Essentials like Social Care and MOW should be frozen, as during the pandemic, service users will rely on these even more and if prices rise, those that need it the most may not be able to pay for it.”

Adult Social Care Charges

“Adult social care charges should be increased though as you need to recruit more social workers especially after the pressures C-19 has put on people.”

“Fees on uncontrollable events and requirements should not be increased, as it's not something people choose to need. Examples include Bereavement Fees and Adult Social Care.”

Bereavement Fees

“At a time when people are being hit with increased bereavement, I think that this should be frozen”

“especially bereavement fees are hitting people when they are already vulnerable.”

“Agree with increase...except for Bereavement fees”

Fixed penalty notices

“Be more realistic with fines for fly tipping. It needs to be high as a deterrent”

“For fly tipping I think this should be increased significantly.”

“Anything like environmental crimes should see the biggest increase in charge, as well as noise nuisance and backyard fires, things that are affecting not just the environment but the people who live in RCT.”

Council Services

- 4.9 Respondents were provided with a list of Council services and asked to choose which services they felt should be protected and prioritised for any additional resources in 2021/22 and those that should not be protected.

Table 3: Council services to be protected and prioritised

	%’s	
	Protect and Prioritise	Do Not Protect
Schools (Current budget £161.6M)	92.1	7.9

School Support Services (£42.3M)	84.9	15.1
Libraries and Adult Learning (£2.3M)	61.3	38.7
Apprenticeship Scheme (£0.23M)	75.0	25.0
Youth Provision (£1.7M)	81.4	18.6
Adult Social Care Services (£97.1M)	90.8	9.2
Children's Social Care Services (£49.8M)	95.5	4.5
Public Health (£4.9M)	91.9	8.1
Housing (£1.1M)	71.1	28.9
Parks and Play Areas (£5.1M)	67.7	32.3
Highways, Transport and Street care Services (£13.9M)	73.1	26.9
Waste and Recycling Services (£18.3M)	79.6	20.4
Cultural, Tourism and Heritage Services (£2.5M)	53.0	47.0
Regeneration / Supporting people out of work (£26.5M)	72.6	27.4
Leisure Services (£3.9M)	59.4	40.6
Music Service (£0.14M)	57.4	42.6

4.10 The **top 3 services** that respondents wanted to protect and prioritise were;

- Children's Social Care Services (95.5%);
- Schools (92.1%); and
- Public Health (91.9%).

4.11 The **bottom 3 services** that respondents wanted to protect and prioritise were;

- Cultural, Tourism and Heritage Services (53.0%);
- Music Service (57.4%); and
- Leisure Services (59.4%).

Efficiencies

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

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

The majority of respondents thought this was a good strategy (94%) and 93.6% said that we should continue to expect our managers to deliver more efficient services.

- 4.13 The following comments have been placed under themes and provide examples of how respondents felt the Council could be more efficient;

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

Enforcement

- 4.14 The Council is limited in how much it can raise fines for some enforcement activity, such as dog fouling. However, as shown in section 4.6 above there is widescale support to increase them where it is possible.

“More fines for fly tipping”

“Increase dog fouling officers and fine heavily”

“Enforcement - more fines for littering/dog fouling/fly tipping”

Digitalisation

- 4.15 A number of comments further support digitalisation, which is one of the Council’s key areas of focus to maximise resources and deliver improved services.

“Reduce back office and move more things online if possible”

“ICT - Self-service for customers. Keep working from home to save on fuel costs, e-expenses”

“Digital transformation is key to simplifying and improving efficiency on services with the public.”

Working from Home

- 4.16 Comments fed back as part of the consultation process support the need for the Council to continue the approach to home working, which was introduced widely across the Council as a result of the pandemic.

“The pandemic has shown that many council workers can work from home this would surely save money if this was continued”

“We’ve seen that many staff are working adequately, if not better, from home. Do we need to support this as an ongoing way of working and reduce heating bills, cleaning costs for some buildings?”

“Working from home has proved a cost-effective strategy, so councils could become more efficient by closing down office space.”

“With the majority of staff working from home now you could reduce your “office sites”

Difficult to find further Efficiencies

- 4.17 There were some concerns that it may be difficult for the Council to continue to make further efficiencies, on top of those already made in recent years.

“You can only become so efficient before services are affected and I would rather we stop just short of being as efficient as we can this go too far to the detriment of these services”

“I find it difficult to think that there are many more areas for efficiency, given the loss of staff and increased automation in my time with the council.”

Use of external contractors

- 4.18 There was a perception by some that the Council used contractors and there were calls to use them less.

“Better training for council employed staff and investment far outweighs the cost of constantly hiring sub-par contractors.”

“Stop using outside contractors directly employ local people to promote growth for local economy and the welfare of local people and families”

Joint Working

- 4.19 Partnership working was suggested as a way of saving money.

“Bring common council services together in one team / location”

“Share the HR department with other neighbouring local authorities”

Senior Managers

- 4.20 As in previous budget consultations, some of the respondents felt that savings could be made with the Council staff structure.

“Reduce the number of Managers at high levels within RCT and get more resources on the shop floor level”

“Reduce expenditures on directorate and senior management”

Council Reserves

- 4.21 Respondents were provided with the following statement and asked if they thought that the Council should continue with such a strategy in terms of the Council Reserves.

Reserves play an important part of the overall financial management of the Council. The Council's General Reserve balances at 31st March 2019 amounted to £10.498M and following an approved in-year allocation of £1.5M to support the Council's recovery work from Storm Dennis coupled with an in-year overspend of £0.289M, the remaining balance at 31st March 2020 is £8.709M.

The level of general reserves will be kept under on-going review and replenished going forward, as appropriate, and taking into account the financial risks the Council faces.

The majority of respondents (82.6%) think the Council should continue with this strategy.

Any Other Comments

- 4.22 Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any other comments on the budget and the following is a selection of feedback received. There were a large number of comments related to Council reserves, a key factor considered to be the "Any Other Comments" question directly following the "Council Reserves" question.

Reserves

- 4.23 There was a general feeling amongst respondents that having reserves was an important part of the budget strategy.

"Reserves are important, cannot cut reserves"

"Reserves are vital and must be maintained for extraordinary events."

"There should always be an emergency fund for when things out of control happen in RCT. and enough to support individuals as well as businesses and companies."

- 4.24 However, the majority of respondents suggested that some of the reserves should be used to improve services and to deal with the impacts of the pandemic. There was a feeling that now was the time to use them and they could be replenished in subsequent years.

“Although, in principal, I agree with a reserve, this seems a lot of money set aside, just in case! I think at least half of this reserve would be better spent on improving services and pay.”

“Reserves are good however there may be a need to defer recovering next year given added pressures following covid.”

“It is great to see that there is money left behind even after all this turmoil that we've been through this year. Perhaps this has shown that not as much needs to be left behind and more could be used and we'd still have enough as a safety net”

4.25 A number of other comments related to efficiencies and working from home, these being covered in other sections of this report.

4.26 There were also a number of comments that praised the Council for the work it has done and is continuing to do to deal with the impact of the pandemic and flooding, earlier in the year. Comments included;

“Good luck. It's a thankless task but you lot are bloody good at this. Keep going!”

“Good work in tough times”

“I think all council staff are under such immense pressure, and they are all doing an excellent job giving these trying times.”

“I think the council are doing an amazing job in very difficult financial circumstances and have been for a number of years.”

“It must be incredibly hard to balance the books after 10 years of austerity, but the council has done extremely well this year faced with the floods and Covid-19”

The Council's Priorities

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

- **Digitalisation** – taking the opportunity new technology provides to deliver better services for residents, visitors, businesses and how we operate internally;
- **Commercialisation** – utilising our scale and expertise to deliver services for other organisations and customers and thereby generate income;
- **Early Intervention and Prevention** – investing in preventative services to deliver savings in the medium term;

- **Independence** – reshaping our services for vulnerable residents to ensure that we promote independence and deliver first class care services; and
- **Efficient and Effective Organisation** – challenging our ongoing service delivery and driving out further efficiencies through for example, a reduction in administration costs and reducing property costs linked to new ways of working, for example through agile working.

4.28 Respondents were asked if they thought the Council should focus on these key areas. The majority of respondents agreed with all of the key areas, with the highest response being for Early Intervention and Prevention (89.6%).

Table 4: Key areas of focus

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)
Digitalisation	80.3	10.3	9.4
Commercialisation	70.6	15.4	14.0
Early Intervention and Prevention	89.6	6.3	4.1
Independence	82.0	10.0	8.0
Efficient and Effective Organisation	88.0	6.6	5.4

Council Investment Opportunities

4.29 Respondents were asked if they thought the Council should invest in a number of service areas. The majority of respondents agreed that the Council should invest in all of the areas suggested, with the most support for investment in Flood Alleviation (93.8%).

Table 5: Areas of Investment

Analysis % Respondents	Yes	No	Don't Know
	21st Century Schools (new and remodelled schools)	69.7	19.5
Roads & Transport (repairs and resurfacing and major projects such as A4119 dualling, Llanharan bypass and Mountain Ash Cross Valley link)	74.5	17.3	8.2
Recycling & the Environment (improving recycling performance)	78.2	15.1	6.7
Town Centres & Regeneration (improving the town centres e.g., Llys Cadwyn, Pontypridd)	76.4	16.3	7.3
Empty Properties (Grant to bring properties back into use)	73.2	18.6	8.1
Leisure (improvements to facilities)	57.6	30.8	11.7
Play Areas and Parks (upgrading the equipment and standard)	66.6	23.3	10.1

Extra Care/Community Hubs (focus on independence for older people)	83.8	10.5	5.7
Employment (apprenticeships and graduate placements)	77.0	15.5	7.5
Events/Arts (investment in attractions and theatres)	52.5	32.3	15.3
Flood Alleviation (investing in flood prevention schemes)	93.8	4.2	2.0

Note: The figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding

- 4.30 The following are a selection of comments received on the Council's investment areas. A number of responses noted that all of the services were important.

"All areas are important to different people in our communities - play areas for young families, apprenticeships for young people to gain skills for employment"

"All entirely commendable areas in which to invest."

"All of these things are essential to provide our residents with a good and balanced environment to live in"

Roads & Transport

"I think there needs to be investment in roads especially where they are found to be in a less than acceptable state and where potholes exist"

"Investment in repairs to side streets should also be given priority."

"roads pavements, making our areas clean, safe and lovely places to live in"

Recycling & the Environment

- 4.31 Positive responses were fed back in respect of the Council's recycling service. In addition, under the environment theme a number of responses were received in relation to climate change issues.

Climate Change

"If the Council is serious in its consideration of the climate and biodiversity emergencies then these must be addressed in the budget.....Revenue funds are necessary if environmental management is to help store carbon, reduce flooding, engage communities, raise awareness, manage our urban green infrastructure etc....."

"Climate change and decarbonisation should be a common theme through each initiative."

"In addition to Flood alleviation, other areas of climate change mitigation and minimisation should be a priority."

“Invest in climate change measures both physical and operational to meet councils Net Zero goals”

Sustainable Transport

- 4.32 Linked to the climate change comments was feedback on the need to invest in more sustainable transport and to build on the behavioural change brought about by the pandemic.

“The council needs to invest in healthier, sustainable and more affordable alternatives. This should be reworking our towns to prioritise walking and cycling.....The council should be investing in more frequent and comfortable bus journeys and boosting public services to help people get around safely and planning and designing our communities to be accessible to those without a car.....”

“During lockdown, there were fewer cars on the road, the sky was clearer, birdsong was louder, and things seemed calmer. Air pollution plummeted. Many people got more comfortable with the idea of walking, cycling, and using new forms of travel.”

Town Centres & Regeneration

“All important particularly town centre regeneration”

“Invest in the towns (education/infrastructure/health) especially Aberdare (10th biggest in Wales). Please make them the focal point in a post-Covid environment.”

“Improve parking facilities in areas such as Treorchy, Tonypany & Porth so that people have easy access to these town centres.”

Play Areas and Parks

“Different families have different needs - therefore it is important that all areas are considered when investing. e.g., Investment in parks and play areas gives families areas to visit - healthier lifestyle.”

“I think RCT have invested well in Play Areas and Parks, Leisure and Events so I feel there is no need for further investment this year”

“More investment needs to be made in parks to provide better facilities and activities to people in order to help with their mental health and wellbeing.”

Employment (apprenticeships and graduate placements)

“Apprenticeship programme is excellent for the young people, giving them opportunities to train and hopefully gain local employment”

“The apprenticeship programme is great too”

Flood Alleviation (investing in flood prevention schemes)

“A priority should be to build adequate protection against flooding for all residents.”

“Flood defences improvements should come from central government”

“More investment in flood defences is welcomed”

Corporate Plan

- 4.33 In March 2020, the Council agreed a new Corporate Plan ‘Making a Difference’ 2020 – 2024 that set the overall direction for the Council over the four-year period. The Corporate Plan is a key component of the Council’s budgetary and business planning process, and it recognises that Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and the wider public sector continue to face significant financial challenges.

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

89.4% of respondents agreed with the Vision and purpose.

- 4.34 The Council is focused on the following three priorities that have also been adopted as its Well-being objectives in line with the Well-Being of Future Generations Act:

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

92.8% of respondents agreed with these priorities.

5. VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

- 5.1 This section outlines the views collected at the virtual consultation discussions that took place with the Older Person's Advisory Group (OPAG) and Disability Forum. 3 Public Zoom meetings were also arranged at different times of the day, but they did not go ahead due to low take up. The online meetings replaced our usual approach to face to face resident engagement.
- 5.2 A video was used to present the background to the Council's budget and then a set of discussion prompts were used to aid discussion and questions were answered by Finance Officers present.
- 5.3 The engagement session with members of the OPAG was held on the 25th November 2020.
- 5.4 A varied range of feedback was provided by OPAG members on the level of Council Tax. Some of the members thought that 2.85% was reasonable;

"On hearing on what others are doing that is quite reasonable"

"Very reasonable expected it to be higher"

Some OPAG members suggested that it should be higher than 2.85%:

"Think it should be more, maybe 4%, don't know what's going to happen in the next year, but the reality is we are stuck with the current situation and the council is going to need all the money it can get hold of"

However, not all agreed and some OPAG members thought 4% was too high, due to more people out of work as a result of the current pandemic.

"Always managed and done a good job at under 3% in the past"

Those that didn't agree with 4% said they were happy with the 2.85% increase.

- 5.5 Everyone at the OPAG meeting agreed that the school's budget should be increased.
- 5.6 With regard to Fees and Charges levels, there were concerns that the Council would not be generating income from facilities such as car parks and cinema entrance fees, due to the impact of the pandemic and the increase in online shopping.

There was support for an increase in enforcement fees.

“Enforcement, need money increase for fly tipping to discourage people.”

“the fixed penalty notice for environmental crimes should be increased.”

5.7 OPAG as a group agreed that all Council Service Priorities listed should be protected and prioritised. There was a short discussion around the apprenticeship scheme, the take up and the demand for it and general support

5.8 All agreed that the Efficiency Savings strategy outlined was a good one and it was fed back that home working should provide opportunity to support the continued delivery of more efficient services.

5.9 With regard to Council reserves, there was support to utilise reserves to aid the recovery from the pandemic.

“COVID was a good reason to use some of the reserves”

There was also support to keep the reserves for the future.

“Maybe take some out of the reserves to help now, but don’t take it all, as we need back up.”

“We need reserves for saving for emergencies.”

5.10 When the Council’s priority of Digitilisation was discussed, it was noted that not all members of the Older Person’s Forums are online and have chosen to not do so. Forum Members fed back that some of the information the Council provides does not always include a telephone number, just a website address.

5.11 A general comment was made by a member of the OPAG at the virtual meeting.

“Pleasantly surprised how well the Council is doing with the money after the year we have had.”

Disability Forum

5.12 Letters and emails were sent to the Disability Forum, inviting them to attend a virtual meeting on the 1st December 2020. Within the letters, we included Easy Read copies of our Budget survey and gave Forum Members the option of speaking to a Consultation officer over the telephone.

5.13 We received 9 surveys in the post and 3 members of the forum attended our virtual meeting.

5.14 Comments from the surveys included:

Schools budget

"I think schools should get more money because what they do for the children."

"As displayed by the Covid-19, the importance of education in schools, hence if more money can be found, it should."

Fees and charges

"I think charges should stay the same."

"I think disabled people should not pay for car parking."

"Meals on wheels should be lowered, so should adult Social services and homes services. Why hit the vulnerable and the older people?!!!"

Council Tax

"This should be paid by people who can afford it."

"We need to make sure of value for money, going to be tight for the near future, spend wisely."

Reserves

"Money should be held in reserves to be used to keep things going."

"Reserves are just that in case as example it is there to act straight away before trying to obtain funding of WAG or UK Government depending on the emergency."

- 5.15 The virtual meeting was run by the Consultation Team with help from the Equalities Team and a presentation by the Service Director - Finance and Improvement Services. A short video on the Council's budget and challenges faced was also shown during the meeting and a number of questions then posed to Forum Members.

5.16 Service Priorities

"protect parks, youth provision, highways and access - considering accessible buildings near train stations, regeneration for that reason also, adult social care priorities for the council"

"A lot of members are concerned about accessibility of highways / pavements and streets, the members feel that it's important to know how much of the Council's budget goes towards that."

"culture services only servicing a certain demographic currently...."

5.17 Council Tax. What is your preferred level of Council Tax increase?

“nobody wants Council Tax to increase, so need to convince us but understand the problem. But it has been very hard this year with COVID”

“You have to remember that this year has been really tough on people and they have a lot less money than they had before... people are going to have to claw back next year.”

5.18 Efficiencies.

“Estates are going to be a major player when we get out of Covid.”

5.19 Reserves

“Given climate change reserves are important”

5.20 Council Priorities

“More opportunities for more people will improve people’s mental health.”

“We need to be more accessible in all areas of RCT.”

6. VIRTUAL YOUNG PERSONS ENGAGEMENT

- 6.1 In previous years the Consultation Team have held face to face sessions with secondary schools and young people across the Borough. Due to the restrictions as a result of the pandemic, this year virtual sessions were arranged in place of the on-site / face-to-face visits.
- 6.2 We engaged with 2 secondary school groups and 3 college groups. We held 5 virtual sessions and spoke to pupils from St. John Baptist Church In Wales High School, Aberdare Community School, Mountain Ash Comprehensive School and Y Pant Secondary School. We also engaged with learners from Coleg Y Cymoedd in Aberdare, Rhondda and Treforest campuses.
- 6.3 The sessions were attended by 2 members of the Consultation Team along with a finance officer. During the sessions the young people were shown a video outlining the budget challenges followed by a short presentation with discussion prompts and questions from the full budget consultation.
- 6.4 The questions were centred around Council Tax levels, Fees and Charges, Council Service Priorities, Efficiencies and the School budget. In total we engaged with 48 young people and a summary of their responses will follow in this section. The sessions were well supported by the teachers and college staff and all young people engaged well with the format.

Council Tax

- 6.5 We asked the groups 'Should council Tax be increased by 2.85% to keep services at current levels or should there be a smaller increase risking losing some services?'
- 6.6 Of the 48 young people we spoke to, 27 were in favour of increasing Council Tax by 2.85% although they were only in favour of this after seeking confirmation that core services would not be affected. The remaining 21 young people fed back that Council Tax should have a lower increase or even remain at the current level, and was based on the view that the Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on employment locally and therefore people may struggle to afford an increase. There was also the belief that services such as grass cutting had been stopped during the initial lockdown and therefore were not deemed to be essential to justify any increase.

Fees and Charges

- 6.7 We asked the young people whether they felt there should be changes to a range of Council fees and charges, providing the options for fees

and charges to be increased or decreased / frozen. The feedback provided is noted in Table 6.

Table 6: Changes to fees and charges

Service	Increase	Decrease / Freeze	Total
Leisure Centre Pay & Play	0	43	43
Sports Club Playing Fees	6	27	33
Car Parking Charges	14	26	40
Cinema entrance fee	7	41	48
Fines (Dropping litter / dog mess etc.)	47	0	47
Lido Adult entrance fee	46	2	48

(Note: Not all participants provided a response for each area).

6.8 Some comments for each area included:

Leisure Centre Pay & Play:

“The fee should be kept as low as possible so that it encourages more people to go.”

“Decrease fees for the short term and then increase.”

“Freeze – access to gyms is quite important for people at the moment with everyone being kept inside.”

“It’s not going to motivate them to join (if fees are raised) and people aren’t exercising as it is.”

Sports Club Playing Fees:

“Fees for sports clubs are high enough at the moment and you might put people off participating if they are raised.”

“There should be a slight increase – the benefit of going to meet your friends outweighs the additional cost.”

“I agree with freezing. I think these facilities should still be accessible to people and due to the impacts of covid, increasing the price would make it less accessible.”

“The costs should depend on the size of the teams. For small teams if the cost goes up it could stop them playing but for bigger teams, they would be able to afford the increase.”

Car Parking Charges:

“Private car parks are overpriced. Council Car Parks should be frozen.”

“A slight increase in the short term, would help to encourage more people to take public transport helping the environment whilst also making more money for the Council.”

*“Cheaper car parking ensures that people park in the correct areas.”
There should be student discount for parking.”*

“If car parks are too expensive in Town Centres it might put people off using the shops there.”

Cinema Entrance Fee:

“No increase – it’s already expensive for young people. If you increase it too much they may not go.”

“Prices should be frozen or lowered. People deserve to go and make use of it.”

Fines:

“Definitely increase these.”

“Definitely higher to deter people. It should be advertised more that you can report people who do this all the time as I didn’t know this.”

“Dog fouling – we need more enforcement.”

“Refresh the signage to remind people of the fines.”

“I don’t think the consequences are really enforced.”

Lido Adult entrance fee:

“Increase as it’s only £2.”

“Increase – as long as it’s kept reasonable so people can afford it then it’s ok.”

“It’s already quite cheap so this could be increased. People would pay more in other areas so this wouldn’t be a bad thing to increase.”

“I’d say the Lido fees right now should be closer to £5.”

Council Service Priorities

- 6.9 We asked all groups to identify which Council services were important to them. We provided a list of service areas and discussions were held

around which ones the groups felt should be a priority and the levels of funding provided.

- 6.10 Apprenticeship schemes were identified as a consistent trend amongst all groups as an area of high importance and where funding is most needed. The groups all felt these schemes played an important part for young people and that sufficient funding would help to see the schemes expanded and widened to cover different service areas. It was identified in one group that 7 young people would have liked the opportunity to apply for an apprenticeship instead of University but held back because they felt there was not a wide variety of apprenticeships available for all academic levels.

Some comments included:

“Apprenticeships are important. More money would give us more of a chance. There’s so many people applying for 1 job these days that we don’t get a chance.”

“We had around 40 young people interested in apprenticeships, but the group felt they were too low level. They felt that they would have wasted 2 years on A levels to go back to a GCSE level.”

- 6.11 Another priority identified across the groups was funding for housing grants / schemes. The ability to be able to access suitable housing options was seen as important by the groups and one that they felt could benefit from increased funding. Feedback included:

“It allows those who may otherwise struggle to be able to afford their own homes which in turn will benefit local economies.”

“It’s important to help people be able to afford to live somewhere.”

“Improving availability could allow many young adults to pursue the career they wanted but may not have had access to otherwise.”

- 6.12 Schools and Education were also a priority by some of the groups. The importance of being able to access a good education with sufficient resources was the main reason for this being a priority for young people. Feedback included:

“Schools are a hub both for children and adults alike. It is the focal point for after school clubs as well as being a place of education therefore its budget should definitely be protected or increased.”

“Schools experience is an extremely influential part of a child’s life and new resources are always needed due to the rapid advancements in technology and teaching methods.”

- 6.13 Public Health was also identified by some of the young people as being a priority service area. Given the impacts of the global pandemic in 2020

young people felt that this required adequate funding to be able to manage the ongoing impacts of Covid-19. Feedback included:

“Public health is also very important, and its money should be increased because in the current climate we really need to put as much of our resources into finding the best way to manage Covid in our communities.”

“It is extremely important to fund these services especially during these times when there is an existing strain on public health services.”

- 6.14 Music services emerged as a strong priority amongst one group with the agreement that the service would benefit from more funding. Members of the group discussed their own personal experience of using the Music service and how they had noticed a decrease in the availability since joining secondary school. Feedback from this group included:

“If there’s more support, more people might want to go down that route. I enjoyed it in Primary School.”

“Not enough funding for this. There should be a wider range of music in Secondary School. There are more options in Primary school than Secondary.”

“This should be protected – it provides children with skills they may use in the future.”

- 6.15 The remaining service areas also received individual comments throughout the sessions which have been noted below:

Library and Adult Learning

“Most learning courses for adults can be done online.”

“Although these are important, a lot of the resources used, and more are accessible on the internet.”

“The advertising from the Council isn’t great, people like my grandparents wouldn’t know about them.”

Waste

“I have chosen waste and recycling services to be protected because they are the services that do not get enough credit. If they were given extra money it would mean that people would be more aware of the necessary work they do, which we don’t really notice.”

Adult Social Care

“Adult social care – similarly to Children’s social care, there is a high demand for adult social care due to the ageing population.”

Roads and Transport Services

"It is important to provide efficient and accessible transport links as a tremendous amount of the local economy is affected by the viability of transport."

Children's Social Care

"There is an increasing demand for children's social services and it is in great need of funding."

Leisure Centres

"Vital part of the community and encourages good health and well – being."

Parks and Play Areas

"During these times parks may not be in need of a lot of funding as it is unlikely that they are being used often due to the social distancing measures."

Cultural, tourism and heritage services

"Greatly benefits the economy."

Regeneration and supporting people out of work

"Has the potential to significantly decrease unemployment rates."

Efficiencies

6.16 We discussed the requirement for the Council to aim to be as efficient as possible and asked for the groups' views on this approach and if they had any ideas of ways in which the Council could become more efficient. The groups all felt that looking for ways to become more efficient was a useful task and the changes to the way in which Council offices are run, particularly during the pandemic, were discussed as a way of embracing working digitally and remotely. Some questions were raised on the process of identifying efficiencies amongst service areas and whether there could be a benefit to having an outside perspective.

6.17 Feedback included:

"Being efficient is probably more important now because everyone is being forced to work so differently. I think more tech work would be a great way to improve efficiency."

"Would it be better to employ specific people to look at efficiencies in the Council from the outside through a fresh pair of eyes?"

"Highways/Road repairs can be unnecessary. They take a long time and seem a waste of money."

“Digitalisation – working from home frees up building costs, utility costs. There could be a building review and centralisation of services.”

“Working from home is efficient but is it as efficient as being in the office as people are missing bouncing ideas off each other.”

Schools Budget

6.18 When asked whether the groups agreed with the Council’s approach to protect and prioritise the Schools budget, 33 young people agreed with this. Of those that agreed, there was agreement that education is an important service area for young people and is something that should continue to receive adequate funding. The groups acknowledged that the increased budget could be used to provide better buildings and school equipment to give learners the best experience possible.

6.19 Feedback included:

“Increasing or even freezing the budget gives children the best education they can have.”

“Important to keep up to date with technology and IT facilities.”

“I think schools should be a priority.”

“Even though it has been maintained, we feel it should have been increased.”



PHASE 1 BUDGET CONSULTATION (2021/22)

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee held on Monday,
16 November 2020 at 5.00 pm.

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

Councillor M Powell (Chair)

Councillor G Thomas	Councillor S Bradwick
Councillor R Yeo	Councillor J Williams
Councillor T Williams	Councillor J Cullwick
Councillor G Caple	Councillor A Fox

Officers in attendance:-

Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services
Mr A Wilkins – Director of Legal Services
Mr C Davies – Corporate Policy and Consultation Manager
Mrs S Handy – Members' Researcher and Scrutiny Officer
Mrs C Hendy – Senior Democratic Services Officer

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor M Adams – Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Others in attendance:-

Mr Fish – Voting Parent / Governor Representative

13 Welcome

The Chair welcomed Members to the second virtual meeting of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

14 Apologies

Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillor S. Rees-Owen, W. Owen and J. Edwards.

15 Declaration of Interest

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

16 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 19th October 2020 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Extract from the minutes

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services provided Members with an overview of the 2021/22 Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation and updated Committee on the following areas:

- General Approach for 2021/22
- Consultation
 - Council Budget 2021/22
 - The Council's Priorities
 - Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Following the update, the Service Director indicated that the overview intended to assist Members in formulating their responses to a number of questions to be posed to the Committee, in line with its Terms of Reference and as a consultee as part of the 2021/22 Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation process.

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

- **Schools Budget**

In respect of school budgets, Committee Members agreed that the Council should provide sufficient resources to fully cover increased pay and non-pay cost pressures in schools.

- **Fees and Charges**

Councillor Thomas indicated that providing feedback is more difficult due to there being no information comparing the UK Consumer Prices (CPI) Index rate and a specific rate for Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Service Director fed back that to provide further context, the key funding sources to fund Council Services were Welsh Government funding and Council Tax, with fees and charges also providing an important contribution to the overall cost of service delivery.

Councillor Cullwick fed back that he felt that the increases set out in Table 6.1 of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 to 2023/24 seemed very sensible.

Discussions ensued and Councillor Caple raised a query in respect of fixed penalty notices for envirocrimes such as fly tipping and expressed his view that the public would welcome an increase higher than the CPI rate. The Service Director advised Members that the feedback would be noted and added that for certain areas there may be a maximise level at which a fixed penalty notice can be set at. Councillor Bradwick advised that as Chair of the

Public Service Delivery and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee he believed this to be correct and that there are 'caps' in place in terms of the level of fixed penalty notice that can be charged for specific envirocrimes. Councillor Bradwick also fed back his view that where permissible, fixed penalty notice charges should be increased.

The Chair emphasised that if Members would like to acquire further information on this area, they should contact the appropriate Service Director.

The Chair sought further information in respect of the Pontypridd Lido and queried whether the current budget modelling includes a proposed increase in fee for the use of pool equipment by children such as floats, noting that children have free entrance to the Lido. The Chair also enquired whether this approach had been applied to cinema entrance fees at the Park and Dare and Coliseum theatres. The Service Director fed back that the current budget modelling position assumes a 1.7% uplift on fees and charges for 2021/22, including the charges for the use of pool equipment at the Pontypridd Lido and all chargeable services provided at the Parc and Dare and Coliseum theatres including cinema entrance fees. The Chair fed back that he would support a nil increase in the charge for the use of pool equipment at the Lido and advised that he would put a list together of different areas and send his views to the Service Director directly for consideration as part of the consultation process.

The Director for Legal Services advised the Committee that Members can put forward their own comments and that the comments will be noted as part of the consultation process.

- **Council Service Priorities**

Members were provided with a list of Council services and were asked which services should be protected and prioritised for additional resources in 2021/22. Committee Members were of the view that all services listed in the slide should be protected.

- **Council Tax**

Members were provided with four options in respect of Council Tax increases for 2021/22. Councillor Thomas and Councillor Bradwick were of the view that the preferred option should be 2.85% and Councillor Thomas noted that this should be in the context of maintaining frontline services at their current levels.

Discussions ensued and Mr Fish, the Voting parent/Governor Representative, noted that there is an increased demand for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) due to changes in household personal circumstances and queried how many people would be brought into the CTRS by a 2.85% increase in Council Tax. The Service Director advised Members that eligibility for the CTRS is based on the individual's income levels and for the first 3 months of the current year for example eligible applications had increased by over 1,000. The Service Director added that additional CTRS costs are being funded by Welsh Government, via Covid-19 funding made available, with the Council forecasting full year increased costs of £1.2M.

Discussions continued and Councillor Yeo fed back his agreement with the current proposed level, and noted that the public should be made aware of how the budget is set for the Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales and also for elected Members to be informed of this. Councillor Yeo added that in respect of efficiency savings, it was the Councillor's opinion that there will be a continued requirement for the Council to deliver efficiency savings unless grant funding from the UK Government is increased. The Corporate Policy & Engagement Manager informed Members that he would make enquiries and provide feedback to Members in respect of the budget setting arrangements for the Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales.

Councillor Thomas emphasised that it will be important appropriate context is provided to the general public as part of the consultation process, such as noting the potential impact if a lower Council Tax increase is agreed. The Service Director advised Members a video will be played at public engagement events setting out key information and Finance Officers will be present to provide additional details as required.

- **Efficiencies**

Mr Fish, the Voting Parent/Governor Representative noted that due to the COVID-19 pandemic more Local Government employees are currently working from home and queried whether accommodation savings are being factored into the process in terms of efficiency savings. The Service Director – Finance and Improvement Services informed Members that more efficient use of the Council's accommodation is an area being progressed, taking into account the transformation that Council services have introduced during the pandemic. The Service Director added that the delivery of accommodation related budget savings will be an on-going programme of work as opportunities are identified and implemented.

Discussions continued and Councillor Yeo expressed his view that technology advancements will also drive and shape service delivery, and provide opportunities to become more efficient, and emphasised that the continued delivery of efficiency savings will be key in helping the Council to maintain frontline services.

In respect of accommodation savings, the Chair noted that whilst efficiency saving opportunities will arise from staff working from home, this will likely to be over the medium term rather than short term, and reinforced the need for all Council services to continue to become more efficient.

Councillor Cullwick queried whether there was potential for efficiency savings through the use of electric vehicles. The Service Director fed back that the Council is currently trialling the use of electric vehicles to assess 'fit for purpose' and is committed to continuing to explore this area to support the Council's carbon reduction ambitions and at the same time consider the financial implications.

Discussions ensued and Councillor Williams expressed her view that it will not always be possible to deliver the same quality of services at the same time as delivering more efficient services. In respect of home working,

Councillor Williams emphasised that there are positives of attending and working in an office environment and that it was important for staff well-being that there is an appropriate balance between home and office working in the future.

- **Council Reserves**

Councillor Yeo stated his view that the Council should continue with the strategy of keeping reserves and emphasised their importance during the unprecedented Storm Dennis adverse weather event in February 2020. Councillor Bradwick also noted his agreement. Councillor Thomas also agreed and emphasised the importance for the Council's reserves to be replenished going forward.

- **Council Priorities / Council Investment Priorities**

The Service Director informed Members that the Council focuses on five key areas to maximise resources and deliver improved services, these being Digitalisation; Commercialism; Early Intervention; Independence; and, Efficient and Effective Organisation.

Members agreed that the Council should continue to focus on these five areas going forward.

The Service Director then indicated that despite reductions to public sector funding, the Council's prudent approach to financial management has ensured significant investment can still take place in priority areas. The Service Director set out key areas for investment and requested Members' feedback in terms of should the Council continue to invest in these areas. Members fed back their support for the Council to continue to invest in the areas listed in the presentation.

- **Corporate Plan**

Members fed back that they were in agreement with the Vision, Purpose and priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan.

- **Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

- **Extended Payments:**

Committee Members agreed that 4 weeks was a reasonable period to continue paying Council Tax Reduction when someone returns to work. The Chair requested Council Tax information by Community Area and the Service Director indicated that he would request this from the service and provide feedback.

- **Disregard War Disablement Pensions/War Widow's Pensions income**

Members noted their agreement that it is reasonable for the Council to continue to totally exclude War Disablement and War Widow's Pensions income when assessing entitlement to the CTR Scheme.

- **Backdating Claims**

Members agreed that 6 months is a reasonable period to backdate claims for working age and pensioners.

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

**SCHOOL BUDGET FORUM
(DRAFT MINUTES - SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE SCHOOL BUDGET FORUM)**

Minutes of the meeting of the School Budget Forum held on Monday, 30 November 2020 at 2.00 pm (via a Virtual meeting).

EXTRACT FROM THE DRAFT MINUTES

<p align="center">PRESENT</p>	<p>Councillor C Leyshon (Vice-Chair) Councillor M Webber Councillor R Lewis</p> <p>Mr R Jones – Treorchy Comprehensive School Mr P Morgan, Glynhafod Juniors / Cwmaman Infants Ms. L. Bailey, Tonysguboriau Primary Ms K Retallick, Ysgol Nantgwyn Mr S Roberts, Maesybryn Primary Mr D Mogford, Maesgwyn Mr A Roberts, Parc Lewis Primary Ms B Cheetham, Y Pant Comprehensive</p>
<p align="center">IN ATTENDANCE</p>	<p>Ms C Jones Mr M Cleverley Ms A Winter – Central South Consortium Mr C Bradshaw Ms G Davies Mr P Griffiths Ms C Edwards Ms S Davies</p>
<p align="center">APOLOGIES</p>	<p>Councillor J Rosser (Chair) Councillor A Morgan Councillor M Norris</p> <p>Mr R Evans – Y Pant Mr D Davies, YGG Aberdar Mr D Jenkins, Ysgol Ty Coch Ms S Mitchell, St John the Baptist School Mr C Coole, Darran Park Primary Ms J Rees, Cwmlai Primary Ms E Beasley - Ysgol Nantgwyn Ms H Nicholas – Tonyrefail Community School</p>

No	Discussion / Action	Action	By Who
8.	<p>BUDGET CONSULTATION 2021/22 (INCLUDING MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN UPDATE)</p> <p>With the aid of a PowerPoint Presentation the Service Director – Finance and Improvement Services provided Members with a summary update in respect of the Council’s Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 to 2023/24 (MTFP) and Phase 1 of the Budget Consultation 2021/22.</p> <p>During his overview of the MTFP Members were provided with information on the Council’s 2020/21 Revenue Budget and financial position, and an outlook over the next 3 years, as set out in the MTFP. The Service Director provided specific updates from the MTFP that included assumptions around Welsh Government Settlement levels; Council Tax; Schools; forecasted ‘inescapable’ and ‘risk’ budget pressures, fees and charges and inflation; Reserves; and overall forecasted spend requirements and resource availability. With specific regard to Schools, the Service Director advised that the Schools Budget for 2020/21 equated to £161.6M (over 31% of the Council’s total budget) and highlighted the long term commitment of the Council to support schools and recognizing that there has been a requirement for local efficiency planning at an individual school level over a number of years.</p> <p>The Service Director went on to provide Forum Members with a series of PowerPoint slides covering the Budget Consultation 2021/22 arrangements, indicating that it is a 2 phase process, adopts a ‘digital by default’ approach due to Covid-19 and provides alternate means for those with reduced or no access to the internet.</p> <p>The Service Director proceeded to ask Forum Members questions contained within the budget consultation and Members were reminded that their feedback would be incorporated into a Phase 1 Budget Consultation report, alongside the feedback received from all other stakeholders, and would be considered by Cabinet as part of it developing a proposed Revenue Budget</p>	Noted	PG

Strategy for the 2021/22 financial year. Forum Members were requested to provide feedback on the following questions.

School Budget

Do you agree that the Council should provide sufficient resources to fully cover increased pay and non-pay cost pressures in our schools?

- Members agreed that the Council should continue to provide sufficient resources, referencing the extra pressure put on schools over the last 8 months due to the Covid 19 pandemic with such pressures continuing into the future. Members referenced the extra support provided through hybrid learning approaches and the essential support being provided by schools in respect of mental health awareness and support, notwithstanding the staffing resource implications and pressures due to Covid itself.
- Members commented on the risk teachers were experiencing everyday (and the risk this presented for their own families) on the frontline due to the pandemic, continuing to keep children's education and wellbeing a priority and commented that in light of this any national pay freeze for teachers would be scandalous.

Fees & Charges

What are your views on fees and charges levels for next year for the following areas (*as outlined within the presentation*) plus any other areas?

- Forum Members were happy with the current position in respect of Fees & Charges.

Council Service Priorities

The Council provides a wide range of important services – which do you think should be most protected and prioritised for additional resources in 2021/22?

- Forum Members were content with the priorities outlined within the presentation slide.

Council Tax

What would be your preferred level of Council Tax increase for next year?

- Some Forum Members commented that any increase would cause financial difficulties for some families and other Forum Members fed back support for the proposed 2.85% increase.

Efficiencies

Do you think this is a good strategy?

- Forum Members commented that all schools were continually trying to deliver efficiency savings although it was noted that schools were now needing to deliver even more during the pandemic, delivering services usually taken forward via other services with specific reference to wellbeing services.

(N.B. Officers commented on the additional measures provided by the Council to assist and support the emotional and wellbeing agenda of pupils through additional funding of family engagement officers, specific grant funding and significant investment for social, emotional and behavioural support)

Council Reserves.

Do you think the Council should continue with such a strategy?

- The Forum agreed that the Council should continue with its strategy in respect of Reserves.

General Comments

- Elected Members of the Forum took the opportunity to place on record their thanks to all schools and their staff who have gone above and beyond and have continued to deliver for the benefit of the young people of RCT in very difficult and unprecedented times. Members commented on the inspiring support being provided to pupils in all aspects of education and wellbeing. The Members also spoke of the importance of the feedback provided by the Forum as part of the budget consultation process and the Council's on-going commitment to support young people across the County Borough.

- Forum Members commented on the genuine pressures placed on schools and again spoke of the support needed to assist them to deliver. Members recognised and appreciated the support already being provided by the Council, at the same time as recognising the on-going challenging environment schools are operating within, and the Forum welcomed working further with the Council to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Part II – Council Priorities

Council Priorities

Do you think that the Council should focus on the 5 key areas of digitisation, commercialisation, early intervention and prevention, independence and efficient and effective organisation to maximise resources and deliver improved services?

- Forum Members agreed that the Council should focus on these areas.

Council Investment Priorities

Do you think the Council should invest in the priorities set out?

- One Forum Member commented on the 21st Century Schools priority and spoke of the huge benefit this priority has for pupils, staff and the whole community.
- The Flood alleviation scheme area was also commented upon as an important investment priority.

Corporate Plan

Do you agree with the Council's Vision and Purpose?

- Forum Members agreed with the Vision and purpose.

Do you agree with the Council's Corporate Plan priorities of People, Places and Prosperity?

- One Forum Member commented on the importance of partnership working between children's services and schools and the continual progress that needs to

be delivered upon.

Part III - Council Tax Reduction Scheme

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

- Forum Members agreed that 4 weeks was a reasonable period.

Disregard War Disablement Pensions/War Widow's Pensions income

- Forum Members felt it was reasonable for the Council to continue to totally exclude War Disablement and War Widow's Pensions income when assessing entitlement to CTR Scheme.

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

- Forum Members were content that 6 months was a reasonable time period.

General Comments

- Forum Members commented that they appreciated the support (financial and non-financial) provided by the Council.

The Service Director thanked all Members for their comments and reiterated that these would be included within the Phase 1 Consultation report presented to Cabinet.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to note the 2021/22 Budget Consultation.