



**CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL**  
**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**  
**COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**A Hybrid meeting of the CABINET will be held on  
Monday, 18th October, 2021 at 10.00 am**

**Contact: Emma Wilkins - Council Business Unit (Tel No. 07385401935)**

**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 Thursday, 14 October 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](mailto:ExecutiveandRegulatoryBusinessUnit@rctcbc.gov.uk)**

**ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

**1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

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

**Note:**

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

**2. MINUTES**

To receive the minutes of the Cabinet Committee meetings on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021 as accurate records.

**(Pages 5 - 22)**

**3. GAMBLING ACT 2005 - STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES (LOCAL POLICY) 2022 - 2025**

To receive the report of the Director of Public Health, Protection & Community Services providing Members with the revised Statement of Principles, under the provisions of the Gambling Act 2005 for the period 2022 – 2025 in accordance with statutory requirements.

**(Pages 23 - 72)**

**4. RCT THEATRES: 2021 CHRISTMAS OFFER SCREENINGS**

To receive the report of the Director, Public Health, Protection & Community Services proposing to Cabinet a screening of RCT Theatres' 2021 Christmas offer of 'Aladdin' at the Coliseum and Park and Dare Theatres and charging a nominal ticket fee, due to the changes in the Covid Alert Level.

**(Pages 73 - 78)**

**5. LIVING LANDSCAPES PROJECT**

To receive the report of the Director, Public Health, Protection & Community Services updating Cabinet on the progress with the Living Landscapes Project and to seek approval for the future progression of the Project to address the climate and biodiversity emergencies.

**(Pages 79 - 90)**

**6. THE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO TACKLING EMPTY HOMES, WHICH IS SET OUT IN THE EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY FOR THE PERIOD 2018-2021**

To receive the report of the Director of Prosperity and Development updating Members on the progress made in implementing the Council's approach to tackling empty homes, which is set out in the Empty Homes Strategy for the period 2018 -2021.

**(Pages 91 - 156)**

**7. THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021/22**

To receive the report of the Chief Executive outlining Rhondda Cynon Taf's draft Corporate Performance Report (CPR) which contains progress for 2020/21 and plans for 2021/22 in respect of the Council's strategic priorities.

**(Pages 157 - 248)**

**8. ENGAGEMENT ON THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET 2022/23**

To receive the report of the Service Director, Democratic Services & Communication informing Cabinet of the proposed approach to resident engagement and consultation in respect of the 2022/23 budget setting process.

**(Pages 249 - 254)**

**9. UPDATE ON THE EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES  
SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS AND PRUS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

To receive the report from the Director of Education & Inclusion Services providing Cabinet with an overview of the progress Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority has made in relation to recommendations from the overarching thematic report Estyn published in January 2021.

**(Pages 255 - 266)**

**FOR INFORMATION**

**10. LEADERS SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

To note the changes to be taken forward with the [Leaders Scheme of Delegation](#):

**Membership Change** – Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group (Cllr J Barton to replace Cllr M Webber. Cllr A Crimmings to take forward the role of Vice Chair of the Steering Group.)

**Officer details update** – Deletion of the Group Director – Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services following N. Wheeler's retirement.

**11. URGENT ITEMS**

To consider any urgent business as the Chairman feels appropriate.



**Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication**

**Circulation:-**

**Councillors:** Councillor A Morgan (Chair)  
Councillor M Webber (Deputy 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  
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  
Neil Griffiths, Head Of Financial Services - Community & Children's Services





## RHONDDA CYNON TAF

### RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday, 21 September 2021 at 11.00 am

#### 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

#### Others in attendance

Councillor P Jarman  
Councillor L Jones

#### Officers in attendance

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive  
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Mr P Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services  
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources  
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates  
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development  
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services  
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services  
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services  
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services  
Ms A Richards, Temporary Service Director - 21st Century Schools and Transformation

#### 36    **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following personal declarations of interest were made pertaining to the agenda:

- County Borough Councillor M Norris – Agenda Item “I am a voluntary Board Member of the Cambrian Village Trust which is mentioned within the report”
- County Borough Councillor G Hopkins – Agenda item 6 “I live on an unadopted Road”

#### 37    **MINUTES**

The minutes of the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021 were approved as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

#### 38    **CABINET WORK PROGRAMME**

The Service Director, Democratic Services & Communication provided Cabinet

Members with a draft work programme for the 2021-2022 Municipal Year, which listed matters requiring consideration by Cabinet.

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 Service Director reminded Members that in response to the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, at the Council's 26th Annual General Meeting, it was agreed that further detail would be provided within the Cabinet Work Programme going forward to allow sufficient opportunity for consultation and pre-scrutiny and as such, the Council's constitution had been amended to reflect those changes.

The Service Director informed Members that the content of the Work Programme would support discussions between Scrutiny Chairs and Cabinet Members at future engagement sessions and subsequently assist development of the future Work Programmes of the Scrutiny Committees.

The Deputy Leader noted the content of the draft work programme and commented that the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires information about forthcoming executive decisions must be made available to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to ensure the Committees are best informed to undertake and better plan their work. The Deputy Leader acknowledged that the development of an accurate and robust Cabinet Work Programme would further strengthen the robust Governance arrangements within the Local Authority.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Work Programme for the 2021-2022 Municipal Year (with appropriate amendment where necessary) and to receive a further update on a 3 monthly basis.

## **39 CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT**

The Service Director, Democratic Services & Communications provided Members with the Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board for the 2020 – 2021 Municipal Year which outlined the work of the Board throughout the Municipal Year. Members were advised that the report also featured the priority areas the Board would be considering in the future ensuring that the Council provides continuous improvement to the services that it delivers for its children and young people within the Looked After System.

The Cabinet Member for Children & Young People and Chair of the Board took the opportunity to thank all Board Members for their work over the last Municipal year as reflected in the report and positive work taken forward within the service for the benefits of the children and young people within the Looked After System and also put on record her thanks to the staff within the service for continuing to deliver during the pandemic.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Services and Welsh Language echoed the comments made and as Vice Chair of the Board paid tribute to the Chair for stewardship during the year.

It was **RESOLVED**

1. To note the Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board for the Municipal Year 2020/21

## REVIEW OF REGULATION, AWARENESS AND ENFORCEMENT OF FLOOD AND WATER LEGISLATION

The Director Highways and Frontline Services provided an overview of his report which provided detail of the review of the regulation, awareness and enforcement of flood and water legislation to be undertaken within the Council following Storm Dennis.

The Director also took the opportunity to further advise members in regard to the implementation of an enhanced Flood Awareness and Enforcement team and increased regulation via the enactment of Land Drainage Byelaws under S66 of the Land Drainage Act 1991.

Members were advised that the Welsh Government's National Flood Risk Strategy published in October 2020 triggers the requirement under S10 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 for the Council as Lead Local Flood Authority to review the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. It was therefore highlighted of the opportunity to set a sustainable strategy to manage flood risk and build resilience and facilitate adaption for future generations.

The adoption of the byelaws and creation of the enforcement team and flooding awareness and support officer would also help protect the assets the Council have, prevent new risks from being created, build resilience within communities and ultimately help communities adapt to this particular consequence of climate change, whilst providing valuable information to feed into the Local Flood Risk Strategy Review to provide a robust strategy to manage the increasing risk of flooding through climate change.

The Leader of the Council referenced the report presented to Cabinet in December 2020 and the resulting recommendations taken forward, referencing the need for an enforcement officer with particular reference to water courses on private land and the need to raise awareness within communities and make communities more resilient to flood prevent.

The Deputy Leader commented on previous flooding within her ward and referenced the support provided by Newydd Housing, providing a high level of protection to its residents and the duty imposed on landlords to their tenants.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure & Heritage welcomed the creation of the enforcement team and the need for the Council to work with communities to ensure communities are working proactively rather than reactively to any flooding.

With the agreement of the Leader, County Borough Councillor P Jarman addressed the Committee at this juncture in the meeting to which the Leader responded advising that with Member's agreement, a Members Briefing session in respect of the byelaws could be provided to all Members ahead of a report to Council at the end of the month.

Following discussions it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To the creation of an enforcement team and post as indicated in Section 4.3 and Section 7 of the report.
2. To the creation of a flooding awareness and support officer post as indicated in Section 4.4 of the report

3. That officers commence the process for the adoption of the drainage byelaws and refer the matter to Council for consideration, with a briefing session provided to all Members prior to the Council meeting.
4. To note the proposal to review the practical operational implications within 12 months of establishing the new byelaws and enforcement team to consider resourcing implications based on actual workload.
5. That the financial implications for the current year are met from existing resources and to update the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2022/23 onwards with the additional ongoing revenue costs

## 41 UNADOPTED ROADS

The Service Director, Frontline Services provided an overview of his report which proposed a pilot programme of works to private streets which the Council considers are not, to the Council's satisfaction, sewered, levelled, paved, metalled, flagged, channelled, made good and lighted. Members were advised that there are approximately 190km of identified private streets across RCT along with an unknown quantity of unidentified private streets commenting that more than 90% of private streets had been identified.

Members were advised that Welsh Government had allocated funding to a pilot project to assist councils to carry out works to bring private streets up to a suitable standard and to adopt them as highways maintainable at public expense. It was advised that the Council successfully bid for £157,000 of funding to carry out private streetworks at Belle Vue, and the Director sought the Council's approval to progress private streetworks at Belle Vue, Trecynon utilising Welsh Government grant funding.

The Leader referenced his involvement in a Welsh Government working group looking at such issues as this was a problem experienced across Wales. The Leader referenced the funding received from Welsh Government and the suggested area for this investment in Belle Vue and also referenced the other 6 pilot areas identified by the Council. The Leader commented on the positive engagement with residents taken forward.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Heritage Services welcomed the pilot programme and the funding received from Welsh Government.

At this juncture in the meeting, County Borough Councillor P Jarman addressed the Committee.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED:**

1. To note and approve the streets listed in Appendix A of the report which are proposed to make up the pilot project.
2. To Determine that the streets listed in Appendix A are not, to the authority's satisfaction, sewered, levelled, paved, metalled, flagged, channelled, made good and lighted.
3. To instruct the Service Director Frontline Services to prepare schemes, estimates and provisional apportionments and to present these for approval in a future report to the Group Director Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services for consideration and approval in liaison with the portfolio holder.

4. To note and approve the proposed works and estimate for Belle Vue, Trecynon as shown in appendix B of the report.
5. That no costs will be apportioned to the property frontagers

**42 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME - PROPOSAL TO IMPROVE EDUCATION PROVISION FOR YSGOL GYNRADD GYMRAEG LLYN-Y-FORWYN**

The Service Director of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Transformation advised Members of the outcome of the recent publication of a Statutory Notice in respect of 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.

Members were advised that following the Cabinet meeting held on the 17th June 2021, a decision was taken to progress to the next phase of the statutory process and to publish the required Statutory Notice. The Statutory Notice was published on 25th June 2021 which triggered the commencement of the Objection Period. This ran for a period of 28 days and Members were advised that no objections or comments were submitted during this period.

The Cabinet Member for Education & Inclusion commented on the ambitious scheme being taken forward and the need to transform the school to ensure the best education for the young people of the County Borough. The Cabinet Member spoke of the positive response to the scheme which was further emphasised as no objections had been received during the objections period.

The Deputy Leader welcomed the further investment into the schools within the County Borough which was echoed by the Leader.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**

1. To note that no objections or comments were received in response to the publication of the statutory notice to progress this proposal.
2. To implement the proposal with no amendments.
3. To receive further reports as the project develops and progresses through the Welsh Government’s 21st Century Schools and Colleges approval processes.

**43 DESIGNATION AS A COUNTRY PARK OF LAND AT CLYDACH VALE, TONYPANDY CURRENTLY KNOWN AS CWM CLYDACH COUNTRYSIDE PARK**

The Director of Corporate Estates presented his report to Members which sought authority to designate land currently known as Cwm Clydach Countryside Park at Clydach Vale, Tonypany (within the Rhondda Fawr Valley) as a Country Park in accordance with the provisions of the Countryside Act 1968. Members were advised of the rationale for the proposal.

The Director informed Cabinet that the Country Park designation would allow the Council to erect Tourist Destination signs, to identify the area’s specific status and promote the area to visitors. The Tourism Service would promote the

location as part of a wider offer to visitors of the park, which would contribute to the 'outdoor activity' theme specified within the Council's Tourism Strategy. The designation of the land as a Country Park would also allow the Council and partners to apply for external grant funding to enhance opportunities for residents and visitors and which will have a direct improvement on health and wellbeing of people using the Country Park.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Service commented positively on the proposal and the positive impact this would have on the local area of Clydach Vale which would further raise awareness of the countryside areas within the County Borough. The Member hoped that this designation would be a catalyst to funding into the area.

The Deputy Leader commented on the features in Cwm Clydach Country park and spoke of the enhancements this designation would have on the already existing positive features.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**

1. To approve the designation of an area of land currently known as Cwm Clydach Countryside Park, measuring approximately 67.2 ha / 166 acres at Clydach Vale, Tonypany as 'Cwm Clydach Country Park' in accordance with the provisions of the Countryside Act 1968

#### **44 COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN - INVESTMENT PRIORITIES**

The Director of Finance & Digital Services referred Members to his report which set out the position regarding the opportunity for Cabinet to propose to Council to further invest in the Council's priority areas, aligned to the Corporate Plan, "Making a Difference" 2020 – 2024.

The Director commented on the importance of investment in areas supporting key Corporate Plan priorities which had already been recognised by the Council with £123M of additional resources, over and above normal Capital Programme allocations, invested since October 2015. He explained that the proposed Council report proposes to continue to invest a further £6.5M in key priorities which could be funded by existing resources already set aside for investment in infrastructure.

The Leader spoke of the important investment in respect of infrastructure and highways and spoke of the funding programme which had continued alongside the investment needed following the repairs following Storm Dennis. The Leader spoke of the inconvenience sometimes experienced when such repairs and investment were carried out but spoke of the long term benefits.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services welcomed the extra £6.5m and spoke of investment already taken forward which had been visible across the County Borough.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To propose the additional investment and funding arrangements as set out in the report at Appendix A to Council at its meeting on 29th September 2021

#### **45 COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE & RESOURCES REPORT (Q1)**

The Service Director, Finance & Improvement provided Members with an overview of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective, based on the first three months of this financial year (to the 30th June 2021).

The Service Director advised that the report was set in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic continuing to pose significant challenges in the delivery of Council Services alongside on-going significant additional costs and income losses that have, to date, been funded in the majority of cases by Welsh Government.

Members were advised that the Quarter 1 revenue budget position was projecting a £0.415M overspend, which was an early projection for the full year and reflects the impact of forecasted changes in demand through to year-end, with key pressures being primarily within Adult Social Care and Children's Services, and takes account of forecasted additional costs and income losses as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic (that are assumed to be fully funded by Welsh Government). The Service Director advised that work would continue to closely monitor the Council's financial position, refresh financial forecasts as updated information becomes available and continue to engage with Welsh Government to highlight the importance of providing additional funding to support the financial implications of Covid-19 and also on-going permanent cost pressures.

In respect of Capital investment as at 30th June 2021 this stood at £10.624M, with a number of schemes being re-profiled during the quarter to reflect changes in costs and also new external grant funding approvals received. The expenditure to date represents the continuation of a long-term programme of investment that is supporting visible improvements to infrastructure and assets across the County Borough, taking account of Covid-19 safety requirements.

With regard to the Council's Corporate Plan priorities of People, Places and Prosperity, overall, good progress has been made during the first three months of the year.

The Service Director concluded his report by advising of the third progress update on the delivery of recommendations to enhance the Council's response to extreme weather events, which shows a positive position, with key actions being taken forward that provide a clear direction for the future.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services thanked officers for the report and commented on the projected overspend and the pressures facing the Council in respect of social services and the need for continued support from Welsh Government to assist in easing these pressures. The Cabinet Member welcomed the continued investment in the capital programme and the continued works undertaken which ran alongside the remedial works needed across the County Borough following the adverse weather conditions. The Cabinet Member paid tribute to Council staff and spoke of the additional pressures placed on services due to the covid pandemic which may have had an effect on the slight rise in sickness levels.

The Cabinet Member continued by providing a detailed overview of the positive works of the Council in a range of different services which primarily looked at improving the services provided to the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The Leader echoed the comments of the Cabinet Member and spoke of the continuation by the Council of core services during the pandemic and also the

evolution of new services to help support residents and partners during this time, with Innovative ways of thinking and delivering of services to ensure the safety of all.

The Deputy Leader took the opportunity to pay tribute to the hard work and dedication of Council staff during the pandemic and beyond.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Welsh Language spoke of the pressures placed on the social care sector and the need for Welsh Government to be alive to the pressures and the need for additional support within this area and again paid tribute to the staff in this sector for going above and beyond for the benefit of others.

The Leader commented that the pressures with social care were acute across Wales and welcomed any additional funding that could be secured from Welsh Government.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the on-going impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on service delivery and, in parallel, the re-introduction of services as Covid-19 restrictions are gradually lifted

Revenue

2. To note and agree the General Fund revenue outturn position of the Council as at the 30th June 2021 (Section 2 of the Executive Summary) and note the incorporation of Welsh Government Covid-19 funding into this position to support on-going service delivery

Capital

3. To note the capital outturn position of the Council as at the 30th June 2021 (Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary).
4. To note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 30th June 2021 (Section 3f of the Executive Summary).

Corporate Plan Priorities

5. To note the Quarter 1 progress updates for the Council's Corporate Plan priorities (Sections 5 a – c of the Executive Summary).
6. To note the progress update to enhance the Council's Short term and long-term response to extreme weather events (section 6 of the Executive Summary)

**This meeting closed at 12.00 pm**

**Cllr A Morgan  
Chairman.**





## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

### **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET**

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 23 September 2021 at 11.00 am

#### **County Borough Councillors - Cabinet Members in attendance:-**

Councillor A Morgan (Chair)

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

#### **Others in attendance**

Councillor J Brencher

#### **Officers in attendance**

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive  
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Mr P Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services  
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources  
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development  
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services  
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services  
Ms L Davies, Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services  
Mr A Cope, Development Officer - Regional Fostering Services  
Ms A Lloyd, Service Director, Children's Services

#### **46      DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, County Borough Councillor R Bevan referenced the following in respect of agenda item 2 : "As in accordance with the dispensation provided to me by the Standards Committee on the 27th November 2020 I have dispensation to speak and vote on all matters relating to the Community and Children's Services Group, save for any specific matters that directly affect my daughter who is employed by the Council in the Community and Children's Services Group as the Service Manager for Access and Enablement."

#### **47      DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT**

The Group Director, Community & Children's Services presented his Annual report to Members which sets out how the Council's Social Services performed last year, highlighting the direction and priorities set for the year ahead.

Members were provided with an overview of the work undertaken, which also reflected on the progress made against priorities set out in the previous annual report. Members were informed that the report differs from previous reports

insofar as it also contains a specific chapter setting out the services response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which has spanned the entire year. The Group Director referenced the profound impact of the covid pandemic on staff and service delivery and the challenging circumstances faced by all.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Services and Welsh Language congratulated the Group Director on his first Annual Report as Director of Social Services and reflected on the momentous events of the previous year due to the covid pandemic, and the affects on staff and users of the service. The Cabinet Member commented on the challenges faced and the continued delivery of services through the pandemic which was a testament to the dedication, commitment, and efforts of staff, not only in social services but across the whole of the Council.

The Cabinet Member continued by discussing the future visions of the service and the need for public engagement in helping to shape these services to ensure they are fit for purpose.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People welcomed the report and took the opportunity to reference the work of the youth services and their proactive approach to delivery of services for the young people of the County Borough, referencing that just 72 hours after the initial lock down virtual offers were being made to those that needed it.

The Leader echoed the comments of the previous cabinet members and the thanks to staff and commented on the immense pressures facing the social care sector.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To approve the Rhondda Cynon Taf Director of Social Services Annual Report attached as Appendix 1 of the report.

#### **48 RCT INTOXICATING SUBSTANCES (INCLUDING ALCOHOL) PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER REVIEW**

The Director of Public Health, Protection & Community Services provided Members with an overview of the report before them which sought Cabinet approval for a new Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for Rhondda Cynon Taf. In addition, the Director informed Members of the outcomes of the public consultation exercise undertaken to review the 2018 PSPO and establish public and stakeholder support for a new PSPO which controls alcohol and intoxicating substance related anti-social behaviour in Rhondda Cynon Taf, including two defined exclusion zones to control intoxicating substance use (including alcohol) within Pontypridd and Aberdare Town Centres.

The Director provided the rational for the new PSPO advising that the proposals needed to be considered as part of a wide range of measures to tackle complex problems such as anti-social behaviour and street drinking. She added that the PSPO is a useful tool but on its own, it is not a solution to resolve issues.

Members were advised that the Council have well established and strong partnership links with South Wales Police and other support agencies and would continue to strengthen these relationships to ensure that they use the most appropriate tools available to tackle such behaviour on a case by case basis.

Members were referenced to the data within the report which supported the rationale for the decisions to be taken forward and details of the public consultation undertaken in respect of the proposals were also highlighted to Members.

The Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, Well-being & Cultural Services welcomed the proposals and the comments within the public consultation in respect of the addition of a new PSPO and referenced the data within the report which supported this view. The Member also welcomed the opportunity to review the 2018 PSPO.

The Cabinet Member commented on the need for businesses to have confidence in the PSPO's and the need to report issues and commented on the frustrations sometimes experienced with current reporting procedures and spoke of the new email service of the police which needed to be further promoted.

With the agreement of the Leader, County Borough Councillor J Brencher addressed the committee on this item, welcoming the introduction of a PSPO.

The Deputy Leader commented on the widespread public support and the need to strengthen the reporting arrangements and spoke of the importance of the partnership arrangements with the police which was paramount to its success. The Deputy Leader also referenced the use of the Pontypridd Bid to assist in tackling problems in Town Centre.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the findings of the review of the PSPO established in 2018 and the public and key stakeholder feedback in relation to the establishment of a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to include prohibitions and requirements to control alcohol and intoxicating substances related anti-social behaviour.
2. To approve a new PSPO for the whole County Borough to control alcohol and intoxicating substance related anti-social behaviour which includes two defined exclusion zones to control intoxicating substance use (including alcohol) in public places within Aberdare and Pontypridd Town Centres.
3. To approve alterations to the boundary of the 2018 Intoxicating Substances Zone as outlined in Appendix 2 of the report, in Pontypridd to include the area around Taff Vale Flats in Lower Graig, the area outside Ty Pennant, Pontypridd and the underpass area adjacent to Pontypridd Bus Station.
4. To approve a new Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for a 3 year period to include the same conditions as the 2018 PSPO and give delegated authority to the Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services to produce the final PSPO relating to Intoxicating Substances including Alcohol and ensure its publication on the Council's website.
5. To retain the fine for fixed penalties issued for contraventions of the PSPO at £100.

## 49 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

The Director of Prosperity and Development sought Cabinet's approval in respect of the contents of the CIL Annual Monitoring Report and the proposed changes to the Regulation 123 List.

Members were informed that whilst two amendments were needed to the Council's updated Regulation 123 List (considered at Cabinet on 17th November 2020) the broad thrust of the List remains the same as it proposes transportation and education projects that support and mitigate the growth anticipated through the Council's Local Development Plan.

The Director referenced the pre-scrutiny undertaken by the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee to assist Cabinet in their deliberations.

The Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development & Housing commented on the lower than previous CIL receipt which was an effect of the covid pandemic. The Cabinet Member thanked the Members of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee and also the Members of the Community Liaison Committee and spoke of the importance work of the Community Liaison Committee in supporting Town and Community Councils to develop their own 123 list to demonstrate to the public on the spend.

The Deputy Leader echoed the comments of the Cabinet Member and reflected on the importance of Town and Community Councils taking a proactive approach to developing a 123 list.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

- (1) The CIL Annual Monitoring Report as attached as Appendix A.
- (2) The Regulation 123 List as attached at Appendix B of the report for publication on the Council website for a period of 28 days and consultation as set out in paragraph 5.8 of the report.
- (3) To approve the subsequent adoption of the Regulation 123 List if no adverse comments are received.

## 50 RCT TOURISM STRATEGY

The Director of Prosperity & Development provided Members with the draft RCT Tourism Strategy which highlighted key tourism related priorities. Members were referred to the public consultation exercise carried out on the draft RCT Tourism Strategy, identifying that overall, respondents were supportive of the Strategy and its contents, and welcome the proposals.

Members were advised that the draft RCT Tourism Strategy had been updated to incorporate some minor amends (brought about from comments put forward during the consultation and from Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee).

The Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development & Housing welcomed the report and referenced the importance of the tourism growth acknowledging the positive effects of the pandemic with the stay at home message in respect of

tourism. The Cabinet Member referenced the £179 million brought in by the tourist industry to the RCT economy and also commented on the employment benefits.

The Cabinet Member spoke of the positive consultation feedback and the bright future ahead in the tourism industry within the county borough.

The Deputy Leader spoke of the diverse range of activities across the County Borough and the need to continue to invest within the tourist industry to improve the facilities for all.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. That following consider of the responses to the public consultation exercise undertaken in respect of the draft RCT Tourism Strategy that no further amendments are required to the proposals, other than those already adopted into the Strategy.
2. To approve the draft RCT Tourism Strategy as the official strategic document that will underpin the Council's tourism priorities and efforts.

51

**TRIVALLIS HOUSING ADAPTATION IMPACT REPORT AND AN UPDATE ON WIDER PARTNERSHIP WORKING BETWEEN RCT AND TRIVALLIS TO PROVIDE ADAPTED HOMES FOR SOME OF OUR MOST VULNERABLE RESIDENTS**

The Director of Prosperity and Development provided Members with an update on the innovative methods used by Trivallis in order to spend their 2020/2021 Adaptations Budget as a result of the Covid 19 Pandemic. Details on the wider partnership working that had taken place between RCT and Trivallis in order to provide adapted homes for some of the council's most vulnerable residents across RCT were also highlighted to Members.

The Director referenced how Trivallis had utilised the 2020/21 adaptations budget underspend, built up due to Covid-19 restrictions, in a more flexible and innovative way, whilst testing out new approaches to meeting the needs of the RCT communities. The Director continued by adding that the projects delivered, outcomes achieved and feedback from some of the County Boroughs most vulnerable residents in RCT had been very positive evidencing the success of the way in which Trivallis had utilised the adaptations budget and the continued partnership working between the Council and Trivallis in order to meet the needs of the communities.

The Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development & Housing thanked Trivallis for the adaptations taken forward and referenced the photos contained within the report which reflected the investment made.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To note that Trivallis have utilised the housing adaptations budget for 2020/2021, following approval from the council, in a more flexible and innovative way that has delivered much needed adapted properties for our communities.
2. To recognise the wider partnership work that has taken place between RCT and Trivallis in order to provide adapted homes for some of our

most vulnerable residents across RCT.

3. For Trivallis to continue to operate this model of delivery, subject to officer approval, for the housing adaptations budget for 2021/2022, in order to deliver adapted properties for our communities in response to the Pandemic.

**52 To consider Passing the Following Resolution:**

It was **RESOLVED:** "That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of the exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act".

**53 FOSTERING SERVICES - FOSTER CARER ALLOWANCES**

The Group Director, Community & Children's Services provided Members with an overview of the exempt report before them, which provided information regarding the planned changes to foster carer fees and allowances to ensure that RCT was ensuring consistency and equity for all foster carers and sought Cabinet Members approval to implement a new policy for foster carer fees and allowances.

During discussions Members placed on record their thanks to the hard work of foster carers. Following consideration of the report of the Group Director, Community & Children's Services containing exempt information Members **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve the proposed changes to foster carer fees and allowances as set out in section 7 and Annex A, B & C of the report.

**54 CYNON VALLEY WASTE DISPOSAL COMPANY LIMITED AND AMGEN RHONDDA LIMITED - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The Director of Legal Services provided an overview of the exempt report which afforded Members the opportunity of inspecting the financial statements of Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Limited and Amgen Rhondda Limited.

Following the consideration of the report of the Director of Legal Services containing exempt information Members **RESOLVED:**

1. The current intention to continue the operation of Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Limited and Amgen Rhondda Limited (the 'Companies') as Local Authority controlled companies into the future is confirmed;
2. Subject to the Director of Finance and Digital Services being satisfied that there are no irregularities in the accounts of the Companies that the accounts be received on behalf of the Council;
3. Azets Audit Services are appointed as auditors to the Companies for the year-ending 31st March 2022;

4. For both Companies, the cessation of the Directorship of the Group Director – Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services on 30th September 2021 (following the retirement of the post-holder); the appointment of the Directorship of the Director of Frontline Services from 1st October 2021; and the continuation of the Directorship of the Service Director – Finance and Improvement Services;
5. To note the continuation of the non-executive director position on the Board of the Companies through to the 2022 Annual General Meetings;
6. The Director of Legal Services and/or his nominee be authorised to exercise the Council's vote at the Annual General Meetings of the Companies in accordance with recommendations 2(ii) to 2(iv) above; and
7. The Council be represented at the Companies' Annual General Meetings by a Cabinet Member.

**This meeting closed at 11.44 am**

**Cllr A Morgan  
Chairman.**

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## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

**18<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2021**

### **GAMBLING ACT 2005 STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES (LOCAL POLICY) 2022 – 2025**

#### **REPORT OF DIRECTOR – PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CLLR RHYS LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES, WELL-BEING AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**Author:** Martyn Owen, Assistant Licensing Manager

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to consider the revised Statement of Principles, under the provisions of the Gambling Act 2005 (i.e. the local policy statement for the management of gambling activity within the boundary of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council), for the period 2022 – 2025 in accordance with statutory requirements.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider the new Gambling Act 2005 - Statement of Principles (Local Policy) 2022-25.
- 2.2 Commend the new Gambling Act 2005 - Statement of Principles (Local Policy) 2022-2025 to Council for adoption in line with statutory requirements.

#### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005 dictates that a Licensing Authority, here being Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, shall before each successive period of three years:
  - a) prepare a statement of the principles that they propose to apply in exercising their functions under this Act during that period, and
  - b) publish the statement.

- 3.2 The recommendations set out in this report are to ensure Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council delivers its obligations under the said Act.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The proposed Statement of Principles must be published by 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2022 in order to come into effect from 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022.
- 4.2 The Statement of Principles is the policy framework which sets out the expectations of the Licensing Authority in matters relevant to the Gambling Act 2005. (The title 'Statement of Principles' is used to differentiate the document from the Licensing Policy which refers specifically to matters determined under the Licensing Act 2003).
- 4.3 There is a statutory requirement to review the Statement of Principles on a 3 yearly basis and the current statement has therefore been subject to review. The process for the review is very prescriptive, in that the Gambling Commission have set out in their Statutory Guidance both the format and content of the Statement of Principles. Whilst it is recognised that the position of respective Licensing Authorities may vary according to the local needs of their area, the format of all policy statements will essentially be the same. This is considered to be in the interest of the trade to enable there to be effective assessment of the policy documents and ease of comparison between authorities.

#### **Statement Review:**

- 4.4 The gambling trade in Rhondda Cynon Taf is very well regulated. The trade is essentially static, with little change in trading position from month to month. Complaints are minimal; licence changes are rare and to date there have been no contested applications which have required determination by the Licensing Committee. As a consequence, there is a 'light touch' approach to enforcement. The Licensing Authority however works closely with the Gambling Commission in respect of complaints received, legislative change and best practice which may impact on gambling activity in our communities.
- 4.5 In view of the foregoing and having considered the very limited amendments to the legislation in the past three years, it is considered that the current Statement of Principles (2019-2022) remains broadly fit for purpose. It has however been reviewed to take account of legislative change and best practice. Such changes do not substantially affect the position of the Licensing Authority in the manner in which it regulates gambling activity in the public interest in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

4.6 The structure of the document remains similar to the current Policy, however there are minor amendments to details and some additions, these are highlighted below:

- Para 12.1 – Additional wording noting child protection requirements supersede data protection legislation limitations – this was requested by the child protection team following the consultation.
- Para 13.6 – Sources of reference added included South Wales Police and Bangor University.
- Para 16 – Whole section is new. This specifies Gambling Operational Risks, referring to how a premise should be run and considerations such as premises design risk, interior design risk, exterior design risk and control measures.
- Para 17.1 – Amendments to wording.
- Para 19.1 – Addition of wording ‘how to identify potential child sexual exploitation and grooming’.
- Appendix C – This is the summary of machine provisions by premises, added for ease of reference to note the gaming entitlement within the different type of premises.

4.7 A copy of the Draft Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Principles (Local Policy) for 2022 to 2025 is provided as **Appendix 1**.

## **5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full EqIA is not required.

5.2 The report does not impact on any one group more than others, except for in a positive nature towards children. The safeguarding of children is a significant consideration for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council as well our key stakeholders and partners. This report is compiled with the intention of keeping children safe and minimising the risk of them and vulnerable adults coming to harm through access to gambling.

## **6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no positive or negative impacts within this report on the Welsh Language. The report is specifically set to abide with legislative requirements.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 The statutory guidance sets out the format of consultation required for the document. The governing principle is proportionality of the type and scale of consultation to the potential impacts of the proposal or decision being taken. It is also accepted that there may be circumstances where consultation is not appropriate, for example, for minor or technical amendments to regulation or existing policy frameworks, particularly where adequate consultation has taken place at an earlier stage.
- 7.2 Based on agreements with the Gambling Commission for previous reviews and given the relatively minor changes introduced it was decided a consultation period of 4 weeks be conducted, which expired on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2021. The consultation has taken the format of direct contact with interested parties as specified in the draft document, a published notice on the Council's website as well as social media pages and premises where COVID vaccinations were being held to assist a larger input. This process highlighting the review and directing people to the website or to contact the licensing office to view a hard copy.
- 7.3 Only one representation was received during the consultation process, this coming from the Child Protection Team within Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.
- 7.4 Contact was also received from Poppleston Allen solicitors who were representing a number of clients within the industry. No additional comments were received.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 9.1 Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005 dictates that a Licensing Authority, here being Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, shall before each successive period of three years,
- a) prepare a statement of the principles that they propose to apply in exercising their functions under this Act during that period, and
  - b) publish the statement.
- 9.2 Failure to prepare a statement of principles and publish it at least 4 weeks before 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022 may result in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council failing to exercise their Statutory functions.

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

- 10.1 Gambling is a widespread and socially acceptable activity in the UK. While most people who participate in gambling activities do so without any significant problems, for others gambling is problematic, causing damage to their health and to wider society.
- 10.2 Gambling is an emerging public health issue in Wales. This Policy will help to achieve a transparent and cohesive approach by all gambling premises within Rhondda Cynon Taff and those responsible for the safe and effective management of those premises.
- 10.3 One of the key focus within the policy is the intention for betting establishments to give careful consideration to applications for premises located near schools or other venues frequented by children and young adults, as well as licensed premises selling alcohol and religious buildings. Each premises must compile a local area risk assessment and review these continuously.
- 10.4 These considerations within the Policy clearly contribute to delivering the Council's priority for improving health and supporting residents within the community.
- 10.5 Keeping children safe from harm is not just a local priority but a significant national concern. This policy assists in working towards this which in turn promotes the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 Having considered the highly regulated nature of the gambling trade in Rhondda Cynon Taf, together with the relatively minor changes to legislation in the preceding 3 years, the current Statement of Principles continues to be broadly fit for purpose, requiring only minor amendment.
- 11.2 The amendments are reflected in the Draft Statement of Principles (Appendix 1) and it is recommended that this be accepted as the Statement of Principles for the forthcoming period 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022 – 2025.

### **Other Information:-**

#### **Relevant Scrutiny Committee**

Health and Well-being Scrutiny Committee

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**18<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2021**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR – PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, CLLR RHYS LEWIS**

**GAMBLING ACT 2005**

**STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES (LOCAL POLICY) 2022 – 2025**

**Background papers**

None

**Officer to contact:**

Martyn Owen, Assistant Licensing Manager



**Rhondda Cynon Taff  
County Borough Council**

**Gambling Act 2005  
Statement of Principles  
2022 - 2025**

**Date effective from 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022**

## Contents

Item	Page
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Part A – Background information</b>	
1. The Licensing Objectives	4
2. Statement of Principles	4
3. The County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf	5
4. Consultation	7
5. Responsible Authorities	7
6. Interested parties	8
7. Licensing Authority functions	9
8. Exchange of Information	10
9. Compliance & Enforcement	10
10. Betwatch	11
11. Fees	12
12. Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults	12
13. Local Area Profiling	12
14. Significant changes in local circumstances	14
15. Significant changes to the premises	15
<b>Part B - Premises Licences</b>	
16. General Principles	18
17. Adult Gaming Centres	26
18. (Licensed) Family Entertainment Centres	26
19. Casinos	27
20. Bingo Premises	27
21. Betting Premises	28
22. Tracks	28
23. Travelling Fairs	30
24. Provisional Statements	30
25. Reviews	31
<b>Part C - Permits / Temporary and Occasional Use Notices</b>	
26. Unlicensed Family Entertainment Centre Gaming Machine Permits	33
27. (Alcohol) Licensed Premises Gaming Machine Permits	34
28. Prize Gaming Permits	35
29. Club Gaming and Club Machines Permits	36
30. Temporary Use Notices	36
31. Occasional Use Notices	37
32. Small Society Lotteries	37
33. Licensing Conditions & Codes of Practice 2015 (LCCP)	38
<b>Appendix A; List of Consultees</b>	40
<b>Appendix B; Table of Delegation</b>	41
<b>Appendix C; Summary of Machine provisions</b>	42
<b>Useful Contacts</b>	44



## **1. Foreword**

- 1.1 Apart from the National Lottery and Spread Betting, gambling is regulated by the Gambling Commission, whose duties include the licensing of operators and individuals involved in the provision of gambling & betting facilities.
- 1.2 Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC (the Licensing Authority) is responsible for certain types of premises in respect of the issue of licences, permits and temporary use notices (amongst other matters).
- 1.3 As part of this process, the Licensing Authority is required to determine and publish a 'Statement of Principles', which details the criteria to be applied when exercising its licensing functions and determining applications.
- 1.4 The 'Statement of Principles' is intended to set the context of the Licensing Authority's approach to gambling matters in it's area and aid applicants, residents, businesses, statutory consultees and the Licensing Committee in decision making, based on relevant local issues.
- 1.5 This document accordingly sets out the Council's 'Statement of Principles', within the parameters of the Gambling Act 2005 (and the Statutory Guidance issued to accompany it), which will in turn provide the framework governing the Licensing Authority when considering applications.
- 1.6 The Council will have regard to the licensing objectives of the Gambling Act 2005 and the Gambling Commission's Guidance to Licensing Authorities in determining applications, and also reserves the right to amend this policy without consultation where it is necessary to ensure that it reflects any revised national legislation or statutory guidance.
- 1.7 This Statement of Principles was approved by Full Council at the meeting held on \*\*\*\*\* and is effective from 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022, for a period of 3 years, (unless revised).

## **PART A**

### **1. The Licensing Objectives**

- 1.1 The Licensing Authority is required to exercise most of its functions under the Gambling Act 2005 with a view to promoting the licensing objectives, namely:-
- Preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime;
  - Ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way;
  - Protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

### **2. Statement of Principles**

- 2.1 This statement of principles is intended to meet the Council's obligations under S.349 of the Act. As per Section 153, in carrying out its' functions in relation to Premises Licences & Temporary Use Notices, the Council will generally aim to permit the use of premises for gambling as long as it is considered to be:
- In accordance with any relevant Codes of practice issued by the Gambling Commission
  - In accordance with any guidance issued by the Gambling commission
  - Reasonably consistent with the licensing objectives
  - In accordance with this statement of principles
- 2.2 It should be noted that this policy statement will not override the right of any person to make an application, make representations about an application, or apply for a review of a licence, as each will be considered on its own merits and according to the statutory requirements of the Gambling Act 2005.

### **3. The County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf**

- 3.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf covers an area of the South Wales Valleys stretching from the Brecon Beacons in the north, to the outskirts of Cardiff in the south. It comprises a mixture of urban, semi-suburban and rural communities, situated in mountains and lowland farmland.
- 3.2 Rhondda Cynon Taf is the second largest Local Authority in Wales, formed in 1996 from the former Boroughs of Rhondda, Cynon Valley and Taff Ely (part). The County Borough covers an area of 424 square kilometres with an estimated population of 241,873 (2020). The area has 75 electoral wards.
- 3.3 Townships include Pontypridd, Llantrisant, Aberdare, Mountain Ash, Tonypany and Porth, however there are numerous smaller commercial areas situated throughout the Borough, consistent with the communities they serve.
- 3.4 The area is land locked and lies between the County Boroughs of Powys, Merthyr, Neath Port Talbot, Caerphilly, Vale of Glamorgan, Bridgend and Cardiff.
- 3.5 Strategic highway links with the wider regions are provided by the M4, A470 and A465. A range of bus and rail services provides public transportation links across the region.
- 3.6 A key priority for the Council is the consideration of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and contribution to the seven associated national goals:
  1. A more prosperous Wales
  2. A resilient Wales
  3. A healthier Wales
  4. A more equal Wales
  5. A Wales of cohesive communities
  6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
  7. A globally responsible Wales

### 3.7 Map of Council Area



## 4. Consultation

4.1 The statement of principles has been subject to consultation with: -

- The Chief Officer of Police;
- One or more persons who appear to the Authority to represent the interests of persons carrying on gambling businesses in the Authority's area;
- One or more persons who appear to the Authority to represent the interests of persons who are likely to be affected by the exercise of the Authority's functions under the Gambling Act 2005.

4.2 A list (not exhaustive) of those persons consulted is provided at Appendix A.

4.3 Enquiries regarding this policy statement can be made to the following contact:

**Name: Martyn Owen (Assistant Licensing Manager)**

**Address: Ty Elai, Williamstown, Tonypany CF40 1NY**

**Tel: 01443 425001**

**E-mail: [licensing.section@rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk](mailto:licensing.section@rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk)**

### Declaration

In producing this policy document, Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council declares that it has had regard to the licensing objectives of the Gambling Act 2005, the Guidance to Licensing Authorities issued by the Gambling Commission and any responses from those consulted on the statement.

## 5. Responsible Authorities

The Licensing Authority is required by regulations to state the principles it will apply in exercising its powers under Section 157(h) of the Act to designate, in writing, a body which is competent to advise the Authority about the protection of children from harm. The principles are:

- a) The need for the body to be responsible for an area covering the whole of the Licensing Authority's area;
- b) The need for the body to be answerable to democratically elected persons, rather than any particular vested interest group.

- 5.3 In accordance with the suggestion in the Gambling Commission's Guidance for Local authorities, this Authority designates the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board for this purpose.
- 5.4 The contact details of all the Responsible Authorities under the Gambling Act 2005 are available on request from the Licensing Team or via the Council's website at: [www.rctcbc.gov.uk](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk)

## 6. Interested Parties

- 6.1 Interested parties can make representations about licence applications, or apply for a review of an existing licence. These parties are defined in the Gambling Act 2005 as follows:

*“For the purposes of this Part a person is an interested party in relation to an application for or in respect of a premises licence if, in the opinion of the Licensing Authority which issues the licence or to which the applications is made, the person*

- a) *Lives sufficiently close to the premises to be likely to be affected by the authorised activities,*
- b) *Has business interests that might be affected by the authorised activities, or*
- c) *Represents persons who satisfy paragraph (a) or (b)”*

- 6.2 The Licensing Authority is required by regulations to state the principles it will apply in exercising its powers under the Act to determine whether a person is an interested party. The principles are:

- Each case will be decided upon its merits. The Authority will not apply a rigid rule to its decision-making. In the case of doubt, the benefit will be given to the party making the representation until the contrary can be shown.
- Interested parties can include trade associations and residents'/tenants' associations, providing that they can show they represent someone who would be classed as an interested party in their own right. Councillors & MPs may also be interested parties, provided they act in respect of their own ward. Elected councillors may also represent interested parties, providing they do not also sit on the Licensing sub-committee determining the application in question.
- Other than these however, the Authority will generally require written evidence that a person/body (e.g. an advocate / relative) 'represents' someone who either lives sufficiently close to the premises to be likely to be affected by the authorised activities and/or has business interests that might be affected by the authorised activities. A letter from one of these persons, requesting the representation is sufficient.

- In determining whether someone 'lives sufficiently close' to a particular premises as to be likely to be affected by authorised activities, or has business interests likely to be affected, the Licensing Authority will have due regard to the Gambling Commission's Guidance to Local Authorities in this respect, together with any other matters it considers relevant to the particular application and /or locality.

## 7. Licensing Authority Functions

### 7.1 Licensing Authorities are required under the Act to:

- Be responsible for the licensing of premises where gambling activities are to take place by issuing *Premises Licences*
- Issue *Provisional Statements*
- Regulate *Members' Clubs and Miners' Welfare Institutes* who wish to undertake certain gaming activities via issuing Club Gaming Permits and/or Club Machine Permits
- Grant permits for the use of certain lower stake gaming machines at *unlicensed Family Entertainment Centres*
- Receive notifications from alcohol licensed premises (under the Licensing Act 2003) for the use of two or fewer gaming machines
- Issue *Licensed Premises Gaming Machine Permits* for premises licensed to sell/supply alcohol for consumption on the licensed premises, under the Licensing Act 2003, where there are more than two machines
- Register *small society lotteries* below prescribed thresholds
- Issue *Prize Gaming Permits*
- Receive and Endorse *Temporary Use Notices*
- Receive *Occasional Use Notices*
- Provide information to the Gambling Commission regarding details of licences issued (see section above on 'information exchange')
- Maintain registers of the permits and licences that are issued under these functions

7.2 It should be noted that local Licensing Authorities would not be involved in licensing remote gambling at all. This will fall to the Gambling Commission via operating licences.

7.3 The Council recognises that the licensing function is only one means of promoting delivery of the three objectives and should not therefore be seen as a means for solving all problems within the community. The Council will therefore continue to work in partnership with neighbouring authorities, South Wales Police, the Community Safety Partnership, Public Health, local businesses, local people and those involved in child protection to promote the licensing objectives as outlined. In addition, the Council recognises its duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, with regard to the prevention of crime and disorder.

## 8. Exchange of Information

8.1 The Licensing Authority, in fulfilling its functions under sections 29, 30 & 350 of the Act, with respect to the exchange of relevant information with other regulatory bodies, will

- Ensure compliance with provisions of Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in accordance with Rhondda Cynon Taf existing policies;
- Have regard to any Guidance issued by the Gambling Commission to Local Authorities on this, as well as any relevant regulations issued by the Secretary of State under the powers provided in the Gambling Act 2005.

8.2 The Authority may, from time to time exercise its powers under S.115 of the Crime & Disorder Act to exchange data with the Police and other partners to fulfil its statutory objective of reducing crime in the area.

The Authority wishes to make its decision making process as transparent as possible and all representations made to it will be shared with all parties to an application.

## 9. Compliance & Enforcement

9.1 Licensing Authorities are required by regulation under the Gambling Act 2005 to state the principles to be applied by the Authority in exercising the functions under Part 15 of the Act with respect to the inspection of premises; and the powers under section 346 of the Act to institute criminal proceedings in respect of the offences specified.

9.2 The Authority has adopted the Government's principles of good enforcement, in accordance with the Regulator's Code. The Corporate Enforcement Policy is available on the Council's web site <http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk> and in hard copy from the Licensing Team.

9.3 The Licensing Authority will be guided by the Gambling Commission's Guidance for Local authorities and will endeavour to be:

- **Proportionate:** regulators should only intervene when necessary: remedies should be appropriate to the risk posed, and costs identified and minimised;
- **Accountable:** regulators must be able to justify decisions, and be subject to public scrutiny;
- **Consistent:** rules and standards must be joined up and implemented fairly;
- **Transparent:** regulators should be open, and keep regulations simple and user friendly; and



- **Targeted:** regulation should be focused on the problem, and minimise side effects.

9.4 As per the Gambling Commission's Guidance for Local authorities the Licensing Authority will endeavour to avoid duplication with other regulatory regimes so far as possible.

Officers of the Council may inspect licensed premises as follows: -

- As part of the application process to assess the risk they pose;
- Random visits following complaint;
- Routine monitoring to ensure premises are operating in accordance with licence provisions

9.5 The Licensing Authority has established a risk based inspection programme. This provides for the targeting of agreed problem and higher-risk premises, but with less regular inspections of those lower-risk premises which are well managed and maintained.

9.6 Test Purchase activities may be undertaken to determine compliance as a complimentary measure to the risk based inspection programme. Such activity will be carried out by Trading Standards Officers. When undertaking test purchase activities, the Licensing Authority (on behalf of the Trading Standards Team) will undertake liaison with the Gambling Commission and the Operator to determine what other, if any, test purchasing schemes may already be in place. Irrespective of the actions of the operator on their overall estate, test purchasing may be deemed to be an appropriate course of action.

9.7 The main enforcement and compliance role for the Licensing Authority in terms of the Gambling Act 2005 will be to ensure compliance with the premises licences and other permissions that it authorises.

9.8 The Gambling Commission will be the enforcement body for the Operating and Personal licences. Concerns regarding manufacture, supply or repair of gaming machines will not be dealt with by the Licensing Authority but will be notified to the Gambling Commission.

9.9 The local authority will conduct multi agency visits to licensed premises to ensure compliance with the licensing objectives.

## 10. **Betwatch**

10.1 The council encourage and will support local operators to create and maintain an information sharing network to discuss issues of problem gamblers that are identified. This will also be an opportunity for operators to discuss issues with the licensing officers.

## **11. Fees**

- 11.1 Premises Licence fees are set within the prescribed maximum levels in accordance with The Gambling (Premises Licence) Fees (England and Wales) Regulations 2007 and will be limited to full cost recovery. Fees for Permits and other services are set by the Secretary of State.
- 11.2 Information regarding the fees to be charged will be made available to the public via the Council's website or in writing upon request.
- 11.3 Where the annual fee for a premises licence or permit is not paid the Licensing Authority will revoke that licence/permit unless we believe it is attributable to administrative error.
- 11.4 Where a payment of an application fee is not honoured by the applicant's bank, the Licensing Authority will not regard the application as properly made and any licensable activity undertaken will be considered unlawful.
- 11.5 All non-payment of annual premises licence and permit fees will be reported to the Gambling Commission.

## **12. Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults**

- 12.1 There has been an increasing awareness of the problems in society generally connected with Child Sexual Exploitation. It is the Authority's opinion that Safeguarding of both children and vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility and that gambling premises should be vigilant in this regard. Operators should have in place appropriate Safeguarding measures and should seek appropriate advice where necessary to ensure that they are aware of both national and local issues, best practice and/ or priorities.

## **13. Local Area Profiling**

- 13.1 The Gambling Commission has introduced provisions in its social responsibility code within the Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice (LCCP), which require gambling operators to assess the local risks to the Licensing Objectives posed by the provision of gambling facilities at each of their premises, and to have policies, procedures and control measures to mitigate those risks. The change in national policy is intended to provide a well evidenced and transparent approach to considering and implementing measures to address the risks associated with gambling.
- 13.2 The risk based approach provides a better understanding of risk, and enables a proportionate response. This approach includes looking at future risks and thinking of probable risks. Risk is not necessarily related to an event that has happened. Risk is related to the probability of an event happening and the likely impact of that event. In this case it is the risk of the impact on the licensing objectives.

- 13.3 Gambling operators are required to undertake a risk assessment for all of their premises. Operators must also undertake a review of those assessments when circumstances change. These triggers, along with the Council's views on what would instigate either a new assessment or the review of an existing one are detailed within this part of the document.
- 13.4 The Council considers that these local risk assessments are a key component of the overall assessment and management of the local risks.
- 13.5 Risk assessments can make reference to the Council's area profile which may be compiled with respect to reported gambling-related problems in an area. At the time of preparing this edition of the Statement of Licensing Policy there has been no evidence presented to the Authority to support the assertion that any part had or is experiencing problems from gambling activities. This position will be kept under review and, in the event that it changes, further research will be carried out to discover the extent of the problems and to prepare an Area Profile accordingly.
- 13.6 Applicants and operators will need to consider factors such as:
- The types of premises and their operation in the local area surrounding these premises
  - The footfall in the local area, for example, does it predominately comprise residents, workers or visitors
  - Whether it is a family orientated area, popular with children and young people
  - Transport links and parking facilities
  - Educational facilities
  - Community centres
  - Hospitals, mental health or gambling care providers
  - Homeless or rough sleeper shelters, hostels and support services
  - The ethnicity, age, economic make-up of the local community
  - Significant presence of young children
  - High crime/unemployment area
  - Alcohol or drug support facility nearby
  - Pawn broker/pay day loan businesses in the vicinity
  - Other gambling premises in the vicinity
  - Community centres
  - Hospitals, mental health or gambling care providers

Crime data for local areas can be obtained from [www.south-wales.police.uk](http://www.south-wales.police.uk)

Bangor University has conducted an interactive map which explores area-based vulnerability to gambling related harm across Wales.  
<https://www.bangor.ac.uk/psychology/research/gambling/gambling-and-health-in-wales>

## **14. Significant changes in local circumstances**

- 14.1 Operators are required to review their local risk assessment if significant changes in local circumstances occur. Changes to local circumstances happen frequently and can be either temporary or permanent depending on the change, how long that change will remain in place and how it affects the local area. However, the requirement for review of the risk assessment is only applicable when that change is significant.
- 14.2 The following lists sets out some examples of what the Licensing Authority considers to be significant changes in local circumstances:
- The local area is classified or declassified by the Licensing Authority as being an area of heightened risk within its Statement of Licensing Principles.
  - Any substantial building development or conversion of existing premises in the local area which may increase or decrease the number of visitors. For example, where premises are converted to a local supermarket or a new office building is constructed nearby.
  - Any new pay day loan or pawn brokers open in the local area.
  - Changes are made to the provision, location and/or timings of public transport in the local area, such as a bus stop which is used by children to attend school is moved to a location in proximity to gambling premises.
  - Educational facilities increase in the local area. This may occur as a result of the construction of a new school/college or where a significant change is made to an existing establishment.
  - The local area is identified as a crime hotspot by the police and/or Licensing Authority.
  - Any vulnerable group is identified by the Licensing Authority or venues relating to those vulnerable groups are opened in proximity to gambling premises (e.g. additional homeless hostels or gambling or mental health care/support facilities are opened in the local area).
  - A new premises involving gambling activity opens in the local area.
- 14.3. The list above is not an exhaustive list of significant changes in local circumstances. The Licensing Authority will provide information to gambling operators when it feels a significant change has occurred in the local area. The Licensing Authority will set out what that change is and may provide information on any specific concerns it may have that should be considered by operators. However, operators must also consider what is happening in their local areas and it is their responsibility to identify significant changes which may require a review and possibly an amendment to their risk assessment. A significant change can be temporary and any temporary changes should be considered and adjustments made to the local risk assessment if necessary.

## **15. Significant changes to the premises**

15.1 From time to time operators will undertake to refresh the premises' layout and décor, which is unlikely to prompt a review of the risk assessment for that premises. However, where there is a significant change at the premises that may affect the mitigation of local risks, then an operator must review its risk assessment and if necessary update it, taking into account the change and how it may affect one or more of the licensing objectives.

15.2 The following list sets out some examples of what the Licensing Authority considers to be significant changes to the premises (some of which may also require a variation to the existing premises licence). As with the examples of significant changes in local circumstances set out above, the following list is not an exhaustive list of significant changes to premises - operators must consider whether any change that they are proposing to their premises is one that may be considered significant.

- Any building work or premises refit where gambling facilities are relocated within the premises.
- The premises licence is transferred to a new operator who will operate the premises with its own procedures and policies which are different to those of the previous licensee.
- Any change to the operator's internal policies which as a result requires additional or changes to existing control measures; and/or staff will require retraining on those policy changes.
- The entrance or entrances to the premises are changed, for example, the door materials are changed from metal with glazing to a full glass door or doors are reallocated from egress to ingress or vice versa.
- New gambling facilities are made available on the premises which were not provided previously, for example, bet in play, handheld gaming devices for customers, Self-Service Betting Terminals, or a different category of gaming machine is provided.
- The premises operator makes an application for a licence at that premises to provide an activity under a different regulatory regime, for example, to permit the sale of alcohol or to provide sexual entertainment on the premises.

### **15.3 Gambling operational risks**

When considering points 13, 14 and 15 above the gambling operation relates to how the premises will be or is run. This will include the operator's policies and procedures which have been put in place to meet the requirements of the business, the Act and/or specific code provisions within the LCCP.

Gambling operators should identify operational risks in the local area to the licensing objectives and then consider whether there are control measures in excess of those already in place that would mitigate the risk. For example if there is a known illegal drug use in the local area the gambling operator may consider using control measures such as maglocks on the toilet doors or change the design to the toilet to deter people from using it for illegal drug use. It is likely that the

identification of risks associated with this element of the assessment will be very similar for all premises with slight variations depending on any specific factors that relate to the premises or the local area.

The control measures that operators will put in place to mitigate any risk associated with the gambling operation will be dependent on the type of gambling activities provided, how the company operates and the size of the organisation.

### **Premises design risks**

The design of the premises is an extremely important factor when considering local risks. For example, an Adult Gaming Centre which is located within an area which has a high number of children and young people present throughout the day may identify that the doors on either side of the premises are being used by local children as a short cut to access the adjacent street. The appropriate mitigation in this case may be that the gambling operator closes off one of the doors to prevent it being used as a short cut.

As part of the design process, the layout of the premises is a major consideration as poorly conceived design may create significant risks to one or more of the licensing objectives. Gambling operators are experienced in premises design and often these considerations are made during the planning phase. It is advisable that gambling operators ensure that there is a process in place to record these key decisions at an early stage of the planning process for the premises design so that this can be included in their risk assessment.

### **Interior design risks**

The internal design and layout will reflect the premises operation and the type of gambling facilities that it offers. For some premises the design will be subject to certain limitations due to mandatory conditions on the gambling premises licence, such as the distance between gaming tables and other gambling facilities in casinos, and restrictions on the location of ATMs.

Operators should assess the risk presented by the internal layout of the premises and the location of gambling facilities within them. For example, if a gaming machine is placed within the direct line of sight of the cashier counter then staff will be able to monitor player behaviour and undertake interventions if there is a concern over the customers' spending habits. Staff can also monitor the use of the machines and can challenge any customers who are believed to be under the age of 18, or who damage the machines, or who appear to be attempting to launder money. By a simple assessment of the optimum location for these machines, operators can significantly reduce the risk to the licensing objectives.

### **Exterior design risks**

The exterior of premises will be a major advertisement for the gambling operator. However, the design should be assessed based on the associated risk. Operators may identify a risk associated with the design and introduce control measures based on that perceived risk. For example, if the premises have a large amount of

glass frontage in an area prone to criminal damage, operators may consider the risk of damage to the standard toughened glass to be high and introduce a control measure such as roller shutters and/or external CCTV cameras.

### **Control measures**

Depending on the nature of the risk factors, the control measures identified to mitigate the perceived risk may be a combination of systems, design and physical measure. Control measures that relate to systems may be measures that have been put in place through policies and procedures. These can either be systems that apply to all of the operator's premises or systems that have been developed specifically for particular premises to deal with a specific local risk factor. System control measures may include staff training, security policies and procedures. They may also relate to having security personnel on entrances, implementing membership criteria and/or providing support to local vulnerable groups through financial or other means.

Design control measures are measures that are built into the design of the premises. These can include the location of gambling facilities and the design and location of cashier counters within the premises, and the exterior design of premises. For example, a control measure for the interior of the premises could involve moving a cashier counter from the rear of the premises to the front of the shop next to the main entrance. An external design control measure may involve the exterior design being tailored to address local risks, for example, more open window displays to enable staff can see out of the premises or a design to avoid attracting children to the premises.

The control measures identified to mitigate a perceived risk may involve a combination of systems, design and physical measures. For example to address the risk factors relating to children gaining access to an over 18 restricted gambling premises, the operator may identify the following control measures:

**Systems:** PASS card or age verification policies, challenge 21 scheme, staff training and door staff.

**Design:** Exterior design which will not attract children into the premises, the entrance layout will enable staff and security to watch those entering the premises and challenge them on the grounds of age.

**Physical:** Magnetic door locks and ID scans.

## **PART B**

### **PREMISES LICENCES**

#### **16. General Principles**

- 16.1 Premises licences will be subject to the requirements set out in the Gambling Act 2005 and regulations, as well as specific mandatory and default conditions, which will be detailed in regulations issued by the Secretary of State. Licensing Authorities are able to exclude default conditions and also attach others, where it is believed to be appropriate.

Premises Licences authorise the provision of gambling facilities on the following:-

- Casino Premises;
- Bingo Premises;
- Betting Premises (including race tracks used by betting intermediaries);
- Adult Gaming Centres (AGCs);
- Family Entertainment Centres (FECs).

Except in the case of Tracks (where the occupier may not be the person offering gambling), Premises Licences will only be granted to those issued with an Operating Licence by the Gambling Commission.

#### **(i) Decision Making**

- 16.2 The Licensing Authority is aware that in making decisions about premises licences it should aim to permit the use of premises for gambling in so far as it thinks it:
- In accordance with any relevant code of practice issued by the Gambling Commission;
  - In accordance with any relevant guidance issued by the Gambling Commission;
  - Reasonably consistent with the licensing objectives; and
  - In accordance with the Authority's statement of licensing policy.

It is appreciated that as per the Gambling Commission's Guidance for Local Authorities "moral objections to gambling are not a valid reason to reject applications for premises licences" (except as regards any 'no casino resolution' - see section on Casinos below – page 14) and also that unmet demand is not a criterion for a Licensing Authority.

- 16.3 The Licensing Authority also notes the Gambling Commission guidance on ensuring that betting is the primary activity of a licensed premise. Gaming machines may be made available for use in licensed betting premises only at



times when there are also sufficient facilities for betting available. Operators will need to demonstrate that betting will continue to be the primary activity of the premises when seeking variations to licences.

In making this determination, the licensing Authority will have regard to the six indicators of betting as a primary gambling activity, as follows:-

- The offer of established core products (including live event pictures & bet range);
- The provision of information on products & events;
- The promotion of gambling opportunities & products;
- The actual use made of betting facilities;
- The size of premises;
- The delivery of betting facilities.

#### **(ii) Definition of “premises”-**

- 16.4 Premises is defined in the Act as “any place”. Section 152 therefore prevents more than one premises licence applying to any place. However, it is possible for a single building to be subject to more than one premises licence, provided they are for different parts of the building and the different parts of the building can be reasonably regarded as being different premises.

This approach has been taken to allow large, multiple unit premises such as a pleasure park, pier, track or shopping mall to obtain discrete premises licences, where appropriate safeguards are in place. However, licensing authorities should pay particular attention if there are issues about sub-divisions of a single building or plot and should ensure that mandatory conditions relating to access between premises are observed.

The Gambling Commission states in its Guidance to Licensing Authorities that: “In most cases the expectation is that a single building / plot will be the subject of an application for a licence, for example, 32 High Street. But, that does not mean 32 High Street cannot be the subject of separate premises licences for the basement and ground floor, if they are configured acceptably. Whether different parts of a building can properly be regarded as being separate premises will depend on the circumstances. The location of the premises will clearly be an important consideration and the suitability of the division is likely to be a matter for discussion between the operator and the licensing officer. However, the Commission does not consider that areas of a building that are artificially or temporarily separated, for example by ropes or moveable partitions, can properly be regarded as different premises.”

- 16.5 **The Licensing Authority takes particular note of the Gambling Commission’s Guidance for Local Authorities which states that:**

- Licensing Authorities should take particular care in considering applications for multiple licences for a building and those relating to a discrete part of a

building used for other (non-gambling) purposes. In particular they should be aware of the following:

- The third licensing objective seeks to protect children from being harmed by gambling. In practice that means not only preventing them from taking part in gambling, but also preventing them from being in close proximity to gambling. Therefore premises should be configured so that children are not invited to participate in, have accidental access to or closely observe gambling where they are prohibited from participating.
- Entrances to and exits from parts of a building covered by one or more premises licences should be separate and identifiable so that the separation of different premises is not compromised and people do not “drift” into a gambling area. In this context it should normally be possible to access the premises without going through another licensed premises or premises with a permit.
- Customers should be able to participate in the activity named on the premises licence.

The Guidance also gives a list of factors which the licensing authority should be aware of, which may include:

- Do the premises have a separate registration for business rates
- Is the premises’ neighbouring premises owned by the same person or someone else?
- Can each of the premises be accessed from the street or a public passageway?
- Can the premises only be accessed from any other gambling premises?

This Authority will consider these and other relevant factors in making its decision, depending on all the circumstances of the case.

**The Gambling Commission’s relevant access provisions for each premises type are reproduced below:**

### **Casinos**

- The principal access entrance to the premises must be from a street (as defined at 7.23 of the Guidance)
- No entrance to a casino must be from premises that are used wholly or mainly by children and/or young persons
- No customer must be able to enter a casino directly from any other premises which holds a gambling premises licence

## **Adult Gaming Centre**

- No customer must be able to access the premises directly from any other licensed gambling premises

## **Betting Shops**

- Access must be from a street (as per paragraph 7.23 Guidance to Licensing Authorities) or from another premises with a betting premises licence
- No direct access from a betting shop to another premises used for the retail sale of merchandise or services. In effect there cannot be an entrance to a betting shop from a shop of any kind and you could not have a betting shop at the back of a café – the whole area would have to be licensed.

## **Tracks**

- No customer should be able to access the premises directly from:
  - a casino
  - an adult gaming centre

## **Bingo Premises**

- No customer must be able to access the premise directly from:
  - a casino
  - an adult gaming centre
  - a betting premises, other than a track

## **Family Entertainment Centre**

- No customer must be able to access the premises directly from:
  - a casino
  - an adult gaming centre
  - a betting premises, other than a track

Part 7 of the Gambling Commission's Guidance to Licensing Authorities contains further guidance on this issue, which this authority will also take into account in its decision-making.

### **(iii) Premises “ready for gambling”**

- 16.7 The Guidance states that a licence to use premises for gambling should only be issued in relation to premises that the licensing authority can be satisfied are going to be ready to be used for gambling in the reasonably near future, consistent with the scale of building or alterations required before the premises are brought into use.

If the construction of a premises is not yet complete, or if they need alteration, or if the applicant does not yet have a right to occupy them, then an application for a provisional statement should be made instead.

In deciding whether a premises licence can be granted where there are outstanding construction or alteration works at a premises, this authority will determine applications on their merits, applying a two stage consideration process:-

- First, whether the premises ought to be permitted to be used for gambling
- Second, whether appropriate conditions can be put in place to cater for the situation that the premises are not yet in the state in which they ought to be before gambling takes place.

Applicants should note that this Authority is entitled to decide that it is appropriate to grant a licence subject to conditions, but it is not obliged to grant such a licence.

#### **(iv) Location**

- 16.8 The Licensing Authority is aware that demand issues cannot be considered with regard to the location of premises but that considerations in terms of the licensing objectives can. As per the Gambling Commission's Guidance for Local Authorities, this Authority will pay particular attention to the protection of children and vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling, as well as issues of crime and disorder. Should any specific policy be decided upon as regards areas where gambling premises should not be located, this statement will be updated. It should be noted that any such policy does not preclude any application being made and each application will be decided on its merits, with the onus upon the applicant showing how potential concerns can be overcome.

#### **(v) Duplication with other regulatory regimes (including Planning)**

- 16.9 This Licensing Authority will seek to avoid any duplication with other statutory/regulatory systems where possible, including Planning. The Authority will not consider whether a licence application is likely to be awarded planning permission or building regulations approval, in its consideration of it. It will though, listen to, and consider carefully, any concerns about conditions, which cannot be met by licensees due to planning restrictions, should such a situation arise.

When dealing with a premises licence application for finished buildings, this authority will not take into account whether those buildings have to comply with the necessary planning or buildings consents. Fire or health and safety risks will not be taken into account, as these matters are dealt with under relevant planning control, buildings and other regulations and must not form part of the consideration for the premises licence.

## **(vi) Licensing objectives**

16.10 Premises licences granted must be reasonably consistent with the licensing objectives. With regard to these objectives, the Licensing Authority has considered the Gambling Commission's Guidance to Local Authorities and some comments are made below.

### **(i) Preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime**

The Gambling Commission will be taking a leading role in preventing gambling from being a source of crime. The Gambling Commission's Guidance does however envisage that licensing authorities should pay attention to the proposed location of gambling premises in terms of this licensing objective.

Thus, where an area has known high levels of organised crime this Authority will consider carefully whether gambling premises are suitable to be located there and whether conditions may be suitable such as the provision of door supervisors.

The Licensing Authority is aware of the distinction between disorder and nuisance and will consider factors such as whether police assistance was required and how threatening the behaviour was to those who could see it, so as to make that distinction. Issues of nuisance cannot be addressed via the Gambling Act provisions.

### **(ii) Ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way**

The Gambling Commission does not generally expect Licensing Authorities to become concerned with ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way, as this will be addressed via operating and personal licences.

There is however, more of a role with regard to tracks, which is explained in more detail in the 'tracks' section.

### **(iii) Protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling**

Apart from limited exceptions, the intention of the Act is that children & young persons should not be allowed to gamble and should therefore be prevented from entering gambling premises, which are 'adult only' environments.

There may also be restriction of advertising so that gambling products are not aimed at or are, particularly attractive to children.

The Licensing Authority will therefore consider, as suggested in the Gambling Commission's Guidance, whether specific measures are required at particular premises, with regard to this licensing objective. Appropriate measures may include supervision of entrances / machines, segregation of areas etc.

This Licensing Authority will also make itself aware of the Codes of Practice, which the Gambling Commission issues as regards this licensing objective, in relation to specific premises.

The Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice (LCCP) issued in 2015 prescribe how Operators **must** prevent children from using age restricted gaming or gambling activities, particularly where gaming machines are licensed.

In particular, Operators must ensure that:

- All staff are trained;
- All customers are supervised when on gambling premises’;
- Procedures are in place for identifying customers who are at risk of gambling related harm.

The Council will expect all operators to have policies & procedures in place as required by LCCP in respect of social responsibility to cover all aspect of the code, in particular staff training and self-exclusion records.

As regards the term “**vulnerable persons**” it is noted that the Gambling Commission is not seeking to offer a definition but states that “it will for regulatory purposes assume that this group includes people who gamble more than they want to; people who are gambling beyond their means; and people who may not be able to make informed or balanced decisions about gambling due to a mental impairment, alcohol or drugs.”

### **(vii) Conditions**

16.11 Any conditions attached to licences will be proportionate and will be:

- Relevant to the need to make the proposed building suitable as a gambling facility;
- Directly related to the premises and the type of licence applied for;
- Fairly and reasonably related to the scale and type of premises; and
- Reasonable in all other respects.

Decisions upon individual conditions will be made on a case by case basis, although there will be a number of measures this licensing Authority will consider utilising should there be a perceived need, such as the use of supervisors, appropriate signage for adult only areas etc. There are specific comments made in this regard under some of the licence types below. This Licensing Authority will also expect the licence applicant to offer his/her own suggestions as to way in which the licensing objectives can be met effectively.

16.12 This Licensing Authority will also consider specific measures which may be required for buildings which are subject to multiple premises licences. Such measures may include the supervision of entrances; segregation of gambling from non-gambling areas frequented by children; and the supervision of gaming machines in non-adult gambling specific premises in order to pursue the

licensing objectives. These matters are in accordance with the Gambling Commission's Guidance.

16.13 This Authority will also ensure that where category C or above machines are on offer in premises to which children are admitted:

- all such machines are located in an area of the premises which is separated from the remainder of the premises by a physical barrier which is effective to prevent access other than through a designated entrance;
- only adults are admitted to the area where these machines are located;
- access to the area where the machines are located is supervised;
- the area where these machines are located is arranged so that it can be observed by the staff or the licence holder; and
- at the entrance to and inside any such areas there are prominently displayed notices indicating that access to the area is prohibited to persons under 18.

These considerations will apply to premises including buildings where multiple premises licences are applicable.

16.14 This Licensing Authority is aware that tracks may be subject to one or more than one premises licence, provided each licence relates to a specified area of the track. As per the Gambling Commission's Guidance, this licensing authority will consider the impact upon the third licensing objective and the need to ensure that entrances to each type of premises are distinct and that children are excluded from gambling areas where they are not permitted to enter.

It is noted that there are conditions which the Licensing Authority cannot attach to premises licences which are:

- any condition on the premises licence which makes it impossible to comply with an operating licence condition;
- conditions relating to gaming machine categories, numbers, or method of operation;
- conditions which provide that membership of a club or body be required (the Gambling Act 2005 specifically removes the membership requirement for casino and bingo clubs and this provision prevents it being reinstated); and
- conditions in relation to stakes, fees, winning or prizes.

#### **(viii) Door Supervisors**

16.15 The Gambling Commission advises in its Guidance to Licensing Authorities that if a licensing authority is concerned that a premises may attract disorder or be subject to attempts at unauthorised access (for example by children and young persons) then it may require that the entrances to the premises are controlled by a door supervisor, and is entitled to impose a premises licence condition to this effect.

Where it is decided that supervision of entrances/machines is appropriate for particular cases, a consideration of whether these need to be SIA licensed or not will be necessary. It will not be automatically assumed that they need to be licensed, as the statutory requirements for different types of premises vary (as per the Guidance, Part 33).

## **17. Adult Gaming Centres (AGC's)**

17.1 The Licensing Authority will specifically have regard to the need to protect children and vulnerable persons from harm or being exploited by gambling and will expect the applicant to satisfy the Authority that there will be sufficient measures to, for example, ensure that under 18 year olds do not have access to the premises.

17.2 The Licensing Authority will expect applicants to offer their own measures to meet the licensing objectives however appropriate measures / licence conditions may cover issues such as:

- Proof of age schemes
- CCTV
- Supervision of entrances / machine areas
- Physical separation of areas
- Location of entry
- Notices / signage
- Specific opening hours
- Self-barring schemes
- Provision of information leaflets/helpline numbers for organisations such as GamCare.

This list is not mandatory, nor exhaustive, and is merely indicative of example measures.

## **18. Licensed Family Entertainment Centres:**

18.1 The Licensing Authority will have specific regard to the need to protect children and vulnerable persons from harm or being exploited by gambling and will expect the applicant to offer their own measures to promote the licensing objectives and ensure that under 18 year olds do not have access to the 'Adult Only' gaming machines. However appropriate measures / licence conditions may cover issues such as:

- CCTV
- Supervision of entrances / machine areas
- Physical separation of areas
- Location of entry
- Notices / signage



- Specific opening hours
- Self-barring schemes
- Provision of information leaflets / helpline numbers for organisations such as GamCare.
- Measures / training for staff on how to deal with suspected truant school children on the premises

This list is not mandatory, nor exhaustive, and is merely indicative of example measures.

- 18.2. The Licensing Authority will, as per Gambling Commission's guidance, refer to the commission's website to see any conditions that apply to operating licences covering the way in which the area containing the 'category C' machines should be delineated. The Licensing Authority will also make itself aware of any mandatory or default conditions on these premises licences, when they have been published.

## **19. Casinos**

There are currently no casinos operating within Rhondda Cynon Taf, it not being a designated area under the provisions of the Gambling Act 2005.

Rhondda Cynon Taf has not passed a resolution to prohibit casinos at this time. The Licensing Authority reserves the right to review the position on casinos at any time.

## **20. Bingo premises**

- 20.1 This Licensing Authority notes that the Gambling Commission's guidance states:
- 20.2 Licensing authorities will need to satisfy themselves that bingo can be played in any bingo premises for which they issue a premises licence. This will be a relevant consideration where the operator of an existing bingo premises applies to vary their licence to exclude an area of the existing premises from its ambit and then applies for a new premises licence, or multiple licences, for that or those excluded areas.
- 20.3 This Authority also notes the Guidance at paragraph 18.8 which states S.172(7), as amended, provides that the holder of a bingo premises licence may make available for use a number of category B gaming machines not exceeding 20% of the total number of gaming machines on the premises. For example, a premises with a total of 25 gaming machines available for use can make five or fewer category B3 gaming machines available on that premises. Premises that were licensed before 13 July 2011 are entitled to make available eight category B gaming machines, or 20% of the total number of gaming machines, whichever is the greater. There are no restrictions on the number of

category C or D machines that can be made available. Regulations state that category B machines at bingo premises are restricted to sub-category B3 (SI 2007/2158: Categories of Gaming Machine Regulations 2007) (but not B3A) and B4 machines.

- 20.4 Children and young people are allowed into bingo premises; however they are not permitted to participate in the bingo and if category B or C machines are made available for use these must be separated from areas where children and young people are allowed.

## **21. Betting Premises**

Persons wishing to operate a Betting Premises will require a betting premises licence from the Licensing Authority and any premises holding such licence must not be accessible to children & young persons.

Betting Machines (bet receipt terminals) in Betting Premises

The Licensing Authority will, as per Gambling Commission's Guidance, take into account the size of the premises, the number of counter positions available for person to person transactions, and the ability of the staff to monitor the use of the machines by vulnerable adults, children & young persons (it is an offence for those under 18 to bet), when considering the number/nature/circumstances of betting machines an operator wishes to offer.

## **22. Tracks**

- 22.1 There are currently no opportunities for betting at tracks within Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 22.2 Tracks may be subject to one or more than one premises licence, provided each licence relates to a specified area of the track. As per the Gambling Commission's Guidance, this Licensing Authority will especially consider the impact upon the third licensing objective (i.e. the protection of children and vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling) and the need to ensure that entrances to each type of premises are distinct and that children are excluded from gambling areas where they are not permitted to enter.
- 22.3 The Authority will therefore expect the premises licence applicant to demonstrate suitable measures to ensure that children do not have access to adult only gaming facilities. It is noted that children and young persons will be permitted to enter track areas where facilities for betting are provided on days when dog-racing and/or horse racing takes place, but that they are still prevented from entering areas where gaming machines (other than category D machines) are provided.

22.4 This Licensing Authority will expect applicants to offer their own measures to meet the licensing objectives however appropriate measures / licence conditions may cover issues such as:

- Proof of age schemes
- CCTV
- Supervision of entrances / machine areas
- Physical separation of areas
- Location of entry
- Notices / signage
- Specific opening hours
- Self-baring schemes
- Provision of information leaflets / helpline numbers for organisations such as GamCare

This list is not mandatory, nor exhaustive, and is merely indicative of example measures.

22.5 **Gaming machines** - Where the applicant holds a pool betting operating licence and is going to use the entitlement to four gaming machines, machines (other than category D machines) should be located in areas from which children are excluded.

22.6 **Betting machines** - This Licensing Authority will, as per the Gambling Commission's Guidance, take into account the size of the premises and the ability of staff to monitor the use of the machines by children and young persons (it is an offence for those under 18 to bet) or by vulnerable people, when considering the number/nature/circumstances of betting machines an operator wants to offer.

22.7 **Applications and plans** - The Gambling Act (S.151) requires applicants to submit plans of the premises with their application, in order to ensure that the licensing authority has the necessary information to make an informed judgement about whether the premises are fit for gambling. The plan will also be used for the licensing authority to plan future premises inspection activity..

Plans for tracks do not need to be in a particular scale, but should be drawn to scale and should be sufficiently detailed to include the information required by regulations.

Some tracks may be situated on agricultural land where the perimeter is not defined by virtue of an outer wall or fence, such as point-to-point racetracks. In such instances, where an entry fee is levied, track premises licence holders may erect temporary structures to restrict access to premises.

In the rare cases where the outer perimeter cannot be defined, it is likely that the track in question will not be specifically designed for the frequent holding of sporting events or races. In such cases betting facilities may be better provided through occasional use notices where the boundary premises do not need to be defined.

This Authority appreciates that it is sometimes difficult to define the precise location of betting areas on tracks. The precise location of where betting facilities are provided is not required to be shown on track plans, both by virtue of the fact that betting is permitted anywhere on the premises and because of the difficulties associated with pinpointing exact locations for some types of track. Applicants should provide sufficient information that this authority can satisfy itself that the plan indicates the main areas where betting might take place. For racecourses in particular, any betting areas subject to the “five times rule” (commonly known as betting rings) must be indicated on the plan.

## **23. Travelling Fairs**

- 23.1 It will fall to the Licensing Authority to decide whether, where category D machines and / or equal chance prize gaming without a permit is to be made available for use at travelling fairs, the statutory requirement that the facilities for gambling amount to no more than an ancillary amusement at the fair is met.
- 23.2 The Licensing Authority will also consider whether the applicant falls within the statutory definition of a travelling fair.
- 23.3 It has been noted that the 27 day statutory maximum for the land being used as a fair, is per calendar year, and that it applies to the piece of land on which the fairs are held, regardless of whether it is the same or different travelling fairs occupying the land. The Licensing Authority will work with its neighbouring authorities to ensure that land, which crosses our boundaries, is monitored so that the statutory limits are not exceeded.

## **24. Provisional Statements**

- 24.1 Developers may wish to apply to this authority for provisional statements before entering into a contract to buy or lease property or land to judge whether a development is worth taking forward in light of the need to obtain a premises licence. There is no need for the applicant to hold an operating licence in order to apply for a provisional statement.

S.204 of the Gambling Act provides for a person to make an application to the licensing authority for a provisional statement in respect of premises that he or she:

- expects to be constructed;
- expects to be altered; or
- expects to acquire a right to occupy.

- 24.2 The process for considering an application for a provisional statement is the same as that for a premises licence application. The applicant is obliged to give notice of the application in the same way as applying for a premises licence.

Responsible authorities and interested parties may make representations and there are rights of appeal.

- 24.3 In contrast to the premises licence application, the applicant does not have to hold or have applied for an operating licence from the Gambling Commission (except in the case of a track) and they do not have to have a right to occupy the premises in respect of which their provisional application is made.
- 24.4 In terms of representations about premises licence applications, following the grant of a provisional statement, no further representations from relevant Authorities or interested parties can be taken into account unless they concern matters which could not have been addressed at the provisional statement stage, or they reflect a change in the applicant's circumstances. In addition, the Authority may refuse the premises licence (or grant it on terms different to those attached to the provisional statement) only by reference to matters:
- (a) which could not have been raised by objectors at the provisional licence stage; or
  - (b) which is in the Authority's opinion reflect a change in the operator's circumstances.
  - (c) where the premises has not been constructed in accordance with the plan submitted with the application. This must be a substantial change to the plan and this licensing authority notes that it can discuss any concerns it has with the applicant before making a decision.

## **25. Reviews:**

- 25.1 Interested parties or Responsible Authorities can make requests for a review of a premises licence.
- 25.2 However, it is for the Licensing Authority to decide whether the review is to be carried-out. This will be on the basis of whether the request for the review is
- relevant to the matters listed below,
  - frivolous,
  - vexatious,
  - will certainly not cause the Authority to wish to alter/revoke/suspend the licence,
  - whether it is substantially the same as previous representations or requests for review.
  - in accordance with any relevant code of practice issued by the Gambling Commission;
  - in accordance with any relevant guidance issued by the Gambling Commission;
  - reasonably consistent with the licensing objectives; and
  - in accordance with the Authority's statement of licensing policy.
- 25.3 The Licensing Authority can also initiate a review of a licence on the basis of any reason that it thinks is appropriate.

25.4 Once a valid application for a review has been received by the licensing authority, representations can be made by responsible authorities and interested parties during a 28 day period. This period begins 7 days after the application was received by the licensing authority, who will publish notice of the application within 7 days of receipt.

The Licensing Authority must carry out the review as soon as possible after the 28 day period for making representations has passed.

25.5 The purpose of the review will be to determine whether the licensing authority should take any action in relation to the licence. If action is justified, the options open to the licensing authority are:-

- (a) add, remove or amend a licence condition imposed by the licensing authority;
- (b) exclude a default condition imposed by the Secretary of State or Scottish Ministers (e.g. opening hours) or remove or amend such an exclusion;
- (c) suspend the premises licence for a period not exceeding three months; and
- (d) revoke the premises licence.

25.6 In determining what action, if any should be taken following a review, the licensing authority must have regard to the principles set out in section 153 of the Act, as well as any relevant representations.

25.7 In particular, the licensing authority may also initiate a review of a premises licence on the grounds that a premises licence holder has not provided facilities for gambling at the premises. This is to prevent people from applying for licences in a speculative manner without intending to use them.

25.8 Once the review has been completed, the licensing authority must, as soon as possible, notify its decision to:

- the licence holder
- the applicant for review (if any)
- the Commission
- any person who made representations
- the chief officer of police or chief constable; and Her Majesty's Commissioners for Revenue and Customs

## PART C

### Permits / Temporary & Occasional Use Notice

#### **26. Unlicensed Family Entertainment Centre (FEC) Gaming Machine Permits**

26.1 Where a premise does not hold a premises licence but wishes to provide gaming machines, it may apply to the Licensing Authority for this permit. It should be noted that the applicant must show that the premises will be wholly or mainly used for making gaming machines available for use (Section 238).

26.2 The Act states that a Licensing Authority may prepare a *statement of principles* that they propose to consider in determining the suitability of an applicant for a permit and in preparing this statement, and/or considering applications, it need not (but may) have regard to the licensing objectives and shall have regard to any relevant guidance issued by the Commission under section 25.

26.3 An FEC gaming machine permit cannot be granted unless the Chief Officer of Police has been consulted and no conditions may be imposed upon grant of the permit. Therefore the Licensing Authority will wish to be satisfied as to the applicant's suitability before granting a permit.

#### 26.4 Statement of Principles

Applicants will be expected to show that there are policies and procedures in place to protect children from harm. Harm in this context is not limited to harm from gambling but includes wider child protection considerations. The efficiency of such policies and procedures will each be considered on their merits, however, they may include appropriate measures/training for staff as regards suspected truant school children on the premises, measures/training covering how staff would deal with unsupervised very young children being on the premises, or children causing perceived problems on/around the premises.

26.5 Applicants will be expected to demonstrate: -

- a full understanding of the maximum stakes and prizes of the gambling that is permissible in unlicensed FECs;
- that the applicant has no relevant convictions (those that are set out in Schedule 7 of the Act); and
- that staff are trained to have a full understanding of the maximum stakes and prizes
- an awareness of local school holiday times and how to liaise with relevant Education Welfare Officers regarding truancy.

26.6 A plan of the premises will need to be provided indicating any entrances and any areas where gaming machines are located.

## 27. (Alcohol) Licensed premises Gaming Machine Permits

- 27.1 There is provision in the Act for premises licensed to sell alcohol for consumption on the premises, to automatically have 2 gaming machines, of categories C and/or D. The premises merely need to notify the Licensing Authority.
- 27.2 The Licensing Authority can remove the automatic authorisation in respect of any particular premises if:
- provision of the machines is not reasonably consistent with the pursuit of the licensing objectives;
  - gaming has taken place on the premises that breaches a condition of section 282 of the Gambling Act (i.e. that written notice has been provided to the Licensing Authority, that a fee has been provided and that any relevant code of practice issued by the Gambling Commission about the location and operation of the machine has been complied with);
  - the premises are mainly used for gaming; or
  - an offence under the Gambling Act has been committed on the premises.
- 27.3 If a premises wishes to have more than 2 machines, then it needs to apply for a permit and the Licensing Authority must consider that application based upon the licensing objectives, any guidance issued by the Gambling Commission issued under Section 25 of the Gambling Act 2005, and “*such matters as they think relevant.*”
- 27.4 Statement of principles
- This Licensing Authority considers that “such matters” will be decided on a case by case basis but generally there will be regard to the need to protect children and vulnerable persons from harm or being exploited by gambling and will expect the applicant to satisfy the Authority that there will be sufficient measures to ensure that under 18 year olds do not have access to the adult only gaming machines.
- 27.5 Measures which will satisfy the Authority that there will be no access may include the adult machines being in sight of the bar, or in the sight of staff who will monitor that the machines are not being used by those under 18. Notices and signage may also be help. As regards the protection of vulnerable persons applicants may wish to consider the provision of information leaflets / helpline numbers for organisations such as GamCare.
- 27.6 It is recognised that some alcohol-licensed premises may apply for a premises licence for their non-alcohol licensed areas. Any such application would most likely need to be applied for, and dealt with as an Adult Gaming Centre premises licence.
- 27.7 It should be noted that the Licensing Authority could decide to grant the application with a smaller number of machines and/or a different category of



machines than that applied for. Conditions (other than these) cannot be attached.

- 27.8 It should also be noted that the holder of a permit must comply with any Code of Practice issued by the Gambling Commission about the location and operation of the machine.

## **28. Prize Gaming Permits**

- 28.1 The Licensing Authority may “prepare a statement of principles that they propose to apply in exercising their functions under this Schedule” which “may, in particular, specify matters that the Licensing Authority propose to consider in determining the suitability of the applicant for a permit”.

### **28.2 Statement of Principles**

The applicant should set out the types of gaming that he or she is intending to offer and that applicant should be able to demonstrate:

- that they understand the limits to stakes and prizes that are set out in Regulations;
- and that the gaming offered is within the law.
- Clear policies that outline the steps to be taken to protect children from harm.

- 28.3 In making its decision on an application for this permit the Licensing Authority does not need to have regard to the licensing objectives but must have regard to any Gambling Commission guidance.

- 28.4 It should be noted that there are conditions in the Gambling Act 2005 by which the permit holder must comply, but that the Licensing Authority cannot attach conditions. The conditions in the Act are:

- the limits on participation fees, as set out in regulations, must be complied with;
- all chances to participate in the gaming must be allocated on the premises on which the gaming is taking place and on one day; the game must be played and completed on the day the chances are allocated; and the result of the game must be made public in the premises on the day that it is played;
- the prize for which the game is played must not exceed the amount set out in regulations (if a money prize), or the prescribed value (if non-monetary prize); and
- participation in the gaming must not entitle the player to take part in any other gambling.

## **29. Club Gaming and Club Machines Permits**

29.1 Members Clubs and Miners' Welfare Institutes may apply for a Club Gaming Permit or a Club Gaming Machine Permit. Commercial Clubs cannot apply for a Club Gaming Permit.

### **29.2 Club Gaming Permit**

The Club Gaming Permit will enable the premises to provide gaming machines:

- Up to 3 machines of categories B, C or D,
- equal chance gaming and
- games of chance as set out in regulations.

### **29.3 Club Gaming Machine Permit**

A Club Gaming machine permit will enable the premises to provide gaming machines:

- 3 machines of categories B, C or D; and
- Equal chance gaming as set out in regulations

The Licensing Authority will wish to be satisfied that applicants for these permits meet the statutory criteria for qualifying member's clubs contained in sections 266 & 267 of the Act.

## **30. Temporary Use Notices**

30.1 Temporary Use Notices allow the use of premises for gambling where there is no premises licence but where a gambling operator wishes to use the premises temporarily for providing facilities for gambling. Premises that might be suitable for a Temporary Use Notice, according to the Gambling Commission, would include hotels, conference centres and sporting venues.

The licensing authority can only grant a Temporary Use Notice to a person or company holding a relevant operating licence, i.e. a non-remote casino operating licence.

30.2 The Secretary of State has the power to determine what form of gambling can be authorised by Temporary Use Notices, and at the time of writing this Statement the relevant regulations (SI no 3157: The Gambling Act 2005 (Temporary Use Notices) Regulations 2007) state that Temporary Use Notices can only be used to permit the provision of facilities for equal chance gaming, where the gaming is intended to produce a single winner, which in practice means poker tournaments.

- 30.3 There are a number of statutory limits as regards Temporary Use Notices. The meaning of "premises" in Part 8 of the Act is discussed in Part 7 of the Gambling Commission Guidance to Licensing Authorities. As with "premises", the definition of "a set of premises" will be a question of fact in the particular circumstances of each notice that is given. In the Act "premises" is defined as including "any place". In considering whether a place falls within the definition of "a set of premises", the licensing authority needs to look at, amongst other things, the ownership/occupation and control of the premises.
- 30.4 This Licensing Authority expects to object to notices where it appears that their effect would be to permit regular gambling in a place that could be described as one set of premises, as recommended in the Gambling Commission's Guidance to Licensing Authorities.

### **31. Occasional Use Notices:**

The Licensing Authority has very little discretion as regards these notices aside from ensuring that the statutory limit of 8 days in a calendar year is not exceeded. This Licensing Authority will though consider the definition of a 'track' and whether the applicant is permitted to avail him/herself of the notice.

### **32. Small Society Lotteries**

This Licensing Authority will adopt a risk based approach towards its enforcement responsibilities for small society lotteries. The Authority considers that the following list, although not exclusive, could affect the risk status of the operator:

- submission of late returns (returns must be submitted no later than three months after the date on which the lottery draw was held)
- submission of incomplete or incorrect returns
- breaches of the limits for small society lotteries

Non-commercial gaming is permitted if it takes place at a non-commercial event, either as an incidental or principal activity at the event. Events are non-commercial if no part of the proceeds is for private profit or gain. The proceeds of such events may benefit one or more individuals if the activity is organised:

- by, or on behalf of, a charity or for charitable purposes
- to enable participation in, or support of, sporting, athletic or cultural activities.

Proceeds must not exceed £20,000 for a single draw and aggregate proceeds from lotteries must not exceed £250,000 in any one year.

Charities and community groups are advised to contact the Licensing Team at [licensing.section@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:licensing.section@rctcbc.gov.uk) for further guidance on their specific proposals.

### 33. Licensing Conditions & Codes of Practice 2015 (LCCP)

The Gambling Commission released an LCCP in February 2015, (commencement date May 2015), the effect of which is to strengthen the social responsibility code requirements. Details regarding the LCCP and Social Responsibility code can be accessed via the Gambling Commission website at [www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk](http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk)

#### 33.1 The Code requires operators to:

- Supervise customers effectively on gambling premises and identify customers who are at risk of gambling related harm;
- Have in place, (with effect from April 2016), schemes to allow customers to self-exclude themselves from all operators of a similar type in the area where they live and work;
- To have a range of measures with regard to marketing to ensure social responsibility that are transparent and not misleading;
- Produce a risk assessment on individual premises, (with effect from April 2016) and have policies, procedures and control measures in place to mitigate local risks to the licensing objectives.

#### 33.2 Risk assessment – Betting Premises

The Social Responsibility Code (SRC) requires all operators of Casinos, Adult Gaming Centres (AGC); Bingo premises; Family Entertainment Centres (FEC's); Betting Shops and Remote Betting Intermediaries to assess local risks to the licensing objectives and to have policies, procedures and control measures in place to mitigate those risks.

Operators are required by the SRC to make such risk assessments available to Licensing Authorities on request, (as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016) and this will form part of the Council's inspection regime and may be requested when Officers are investigating complaints.

#### 33.3 The SRC requires the Council to set out in their Statement of Principles, the matters they expect the operator to take account of in the risk assessment. This Council expects the following general matters to be considered by Operators when making risk assessments:-

- **Information held by the Licensee regarding self-exclusions and incidences of under-age gambling;**
- **Gaming trends that may reflect benefit payments;**
- **Arrangements for localised exchange of information regarding self-exclusion and gaming trends;**

- Urban setting such as proximity to schools, commercial environment, factors affecting footfall;
- Facilities in proximity to the licensed premises such as other gambling outlets, Banks, Post Offices, refreshment and entertainment type facilities;
- Regard to local problems in the area such as anti social behaviour arising from street drinkers, youth annoyance, substance misuse etc.

**33.4 Matters relating to children & young persons specifically including:-**

- Premises, places or areas where presence of children and young persons should be expected such as schools, youth clubs, parks, playgrounds and entertainment venues such as Bowling Alleys, Cinemas etc;
- Any premises where children are likely to congregate including Bus Stops; Cafes, shops or any other place where children are attracted;
- Areas that are prone to issues of youths participating in anti social behaviour, including such activities as graffiti/tagging, underage drinking etc
- Recorded incidents of attempted underage gambling.

**33.5 Matters relating specifically to vulnerable adults including:-**

- Information held by the licensee regarding self-exclusions and incidences of underage gambling;
- Gaming trends that mirror days for financial payments such as pay days or Benefit Payments;
- Arrangements for localised exchange of information regarding self-exclusion and gaming trends;
- Proximity of premises which may be frequented by vulnerable people such as Hospitals; Residential Care Homes; medical facilities; Doctor's Surgeries; Housing Offices Addiction Clinics or Help Centres and other places where persons experiencing substance misuse may congregate.

**33.6 This list is not exhaustive and there may be other matters identified that will require consideration , such as matters of faith, including all religious & faith denominations including proximity of churches, mosques, temples or any other place of worship.**

## List of Consultees

A list of persons consulted is provided below. It should be noted that unsolicited comments may have been received from other persons but have not been listed.

The Gambling Act requires that the following parties be consulted by Licensing Authorities:

***One or more persons, who appear to the Authority to represent the interests of persons carrying on gambling businesses in the Authority's area.***

The Authority has therefore consulted:

- William Hill plc
- Done Bros T/A 'Betfred'
- The Ladbrokes Coral Group
- British Beer & Pub Association
- BACTA
- Top Ten Bingo / Castle Bingo / Cashino Gaming
- BALPPA
- Association of British Bookmakers (ABB)
- Gamcare
- Bingo Association of Great Britain
- Independent Bookmakers in the area

***One or more persons who appear to the Authority to represent the interests of persons who are likely to be affected by the exercise of the Authority's functions under the Gambling Act 2005:***

- Gambling Commission
- South Wales Police
- South Wales Fire & Rescue Service
- Head Of Planning & Development, RCT CBC
- Head of Child Protection & Reviewing Services RCT CBC
- Environment Team RCT CBC
- Workingmen's Clubs & Institute Union
- HM Revenue & Customs
- Public Health Wales

## Appendix B

### Table of Delegations of Licensing Functions

MATTER TO BE DEALT WITH	FULL COUNCIL	SUB-COMMITTEE	OFFICERS
Three year statement of principles	<b>X</b>		
Policy not to permit casinos	<b>X</b>		
Fee setting - when appropriate			<b>X</b> (to be approved by the Executive)
Application for premises licences		Where representations have been received and not withdrawn	Where no representations received/representations have been withdrawn
Application for a variation to a licence		Where representations have been received and not withdrawn	Where no representations received/representations have been withdrawn
Application for a transfer of a licence		Where representations have been received from the Commission	Where no representations received from the Commission
Application for a provisional statement		Where representations have been received and not withdrawn	Where no representations received/representations have been withdrawn
Review of a premises licence		<b>X</b>	
Application for club gaming/club machine permits		Where representations have been received and not withdrawn	Where no representations received/representations have been withdrawn
Cancellation of club gaming/club machine permits		<b>X</b>	
Applications for other permits			<b>X</b>
Cancellation of licensed premises gaming machine permits			<b>X</b>
Consideration of temporary use notice			<b>X</b>
Decision to give a counter notice to a temporary use notice		<b>X</b>	
<i>*Duty to comply with requirement to provide information to Gambling Commission</i>			<b>X</b>
<i>*Functions relating to exchange of information</i>			<b>X</b>
<i>*Registration &amp; regulation of small society lotteries</i>			<b>X</b>

**X** indicates at the lowest level to which decisions can be delegate

\* as per Local Authorities(Executive Arrangements)(Functions & Responsibilities)(Wales)(Amendment) Regulations 2009

## Summary of Machine Provisions by Premises

Machine category							
Premises type	A	B1	B2	B3	B4	C	D
<b>Large casino</b> (machine/table ratio of 5-1 up to maximum)				Maximum of 150 machines Any combination of machines in categories B to D (except B3A machines), within the total limit of 150 (subject to machine/table ratio)			
<b>Small casino</b> (machine/table ratio of 2-1 up to maximum)				Maximum of 80 machines Any combination of machines in categories B to D (except B3A machines), within the total limit of 80 (subject to machine/table ratio)			
<b>Pre-2005 Act casino</b> (no machine/table ratio)				Maximum of 20 machines categories B to D (except B3A machines), or any number of C or D machines instead			
<b>Betting premises and tracks occupied by pool betting</b>				Maximum of 4 machines categories B2 to D (except B3A machines)			
<b>Bingo premises<sup>1</sup></b>			Maximum of 20% of the total number of gaming machines which are available for use on the premises categories B3 or B4			No limit on category C or D machines	
<b>Adult gaming centre<sup>2</sup></b>			Maximum of 20% of the total number of gaming machines which are available for use on the premises categories B3 or B4			No limit on category C or D machines	
<b>Licensed family entertainment centre<sup>3</sup></b>				No limit on category C or D machines			
<b>Family entertainment centre</b> (with permit) <sup>3</sup>				No limit on category D machines			
<b>Clubs or miners' welfare institute</b> (with permits) <sup>4</sup>				Maximum of 3 machines in categories B3A or B4 to D			
<b>Qualifying alcohol-licensed premises</b>				1 or 2 machines of category C or D automatic upon notification			
<b>Qualifying alcohol-licensed premises</b> (with licensed premises gaming machine permit)				Number of category C-D machines as specified on permit			
<b>Travelling fair</b>			No limit on category D machines				

<sup>1</sup> Bingo premises licence are entitled to make available for use a number of category B gaming machines not exceeding 20% of the total number of gaming machines on the premises. Where a premises licence was granted before 13 July 2011, they are entitled to make available eight (The Gambling Act 2005 (Gaming Machines in Bingo Premises) Order 2009) category B gaming machines, or 20% of the total number of gaming machines, whichever is the greater. Category B machines at bingo premises are restricted to sub-category B3 and B4 machines, but not B3A machines.

<sup>2</sup> Adult gaming centres are entitled to make available for use a number of category B gaming machines not exceeding 20% of the total number of gaming machines which are available for use on the premises and any number of category C or D machines. Where a premises licence was granted before 13 July 2011, they are entitled to make available four category B gaming machines, or 20% of the total number of gaming machines, whichever is the greater. Category



B machines at adult gaming centres are restricted to sub-category B3 and B4 machines, but not B3A machines.

<sup>3</sup> Only premises that are wholly or mainly used for making gaming machines available may hold an unlicensed FEC gaming machine permit or an FEC premises licence. Category C machines may only be sited within licensed FECs and where an FEC permit is in force. They must be in a separate area to ensure the segregation and supervision of machines that may only be played by adults. There is no power for the licensing authority to set a limit on the number of machines under the FEC permit.

<sup>4</sup> Members' clubs and miners' welfare institutes with a club gaming permit or with a club machine permit, are entitled to site a total of three machines in categories B3A to D but only one B3A machine can be sited as part of this entitlement.

<sup>5</sup> Commercial clubs with club machine or gaming permits are entitled to a total of three machines in categories B4 to D.

# Useful Contacts

Further information about the Gambling Act 2005, this Statement of Principles or the application process can be obtained from:-

**Martyn Owen (Assistant Licensing Manager)**  
**Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council**  
**Ty Elai**  
**Dinas Isaf East**  
**Williamstown**  
**Tonypandy CF40 1NY**

**Tel: 01443 425001**

**E-mail: [licensing.section@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:licensing.section@rctcbc.gov.uk)**

**Website : [www.rctcbc.gov.uk](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk)**

Information is also available from:-

## **Gambling Commission**

**Victoria Square House**  
**Victoria Square**  
**Birmingham**  
**B2 4BP**

**Tel: 0121 230 6666**  
**Fax: 0121 237 6720**

**E-mail: [info@gamblingcommission.gov.uk](mailto:info@gamblingcommission.gov.uk)**

**Website : [www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk](http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk)**

## **Department of Culture, Media and Sport**

**2-4 Cockspur Street**  
**London**  
**SW1Y 5DH**

**Tel: 020 7211 6200**

**E-mail: [enquiries@culture.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@culture.gov.uk)**

**Website : [www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk)**

## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

**18<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021**

#### **RCT THEATRES: 2021 CHRISTMAS OFFER SCREENINGS**

#### **REPORT OF DIRECTOR – PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CLLR. RHYS LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES, WELL-BEING & CULTURAL SERVICES**

**Author: Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Arts & Culture Manager**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 Given that Wales is now at Alert Level 0 enabling theatres to fully reopen, the purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for screening RCT Theatres' 2021 digital Christmas offer of 'Aladdin' at the Coliseum and Park and Dare Theatres free of charge.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approve the proposal to screen RCT Theatres' digital Christmas offer of 'Aladdin' at the Coliseum and Park and Dare Theatres in December 2021 as a cinema experience with tickets available free of charge.

#### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Welsh Government guidance states that as of 7<sup>th</sup> August 2021, Wales moved to Alert Level 0, whereby there are no legal limits on the number of people who can meet, including in public places or at events.
- 3.2 In April 2021, Cabinet approved the provision of a digital Christmas offer of 'Aladdin' in December 2021 and for the production to be made available free of charge via the RCT Theatres YouTube Channel.
- 3.3 In order for RCT Theatres to provide a festive family experience that is close to our regular festive offer, approval is being sought to screen 'Aladdin' over a series of dates in December 2021 at each of our theatres with tickets available free of charge to ensure equitable access to the Christmas offer for residents and children who may be digitally excluded.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

##### RCT Theatres' 2021 Christmas Offer

- 4.1 Given the uncertainty in relation to Covid restrictions, Cabinet approved the provision of a Christmas digital offer of 'Aladdin' in December 2021 and the postponement of RCT Theatres' 'Dick Whittington' pantomime until December 2022 at an April 2021 meeting.
- 4.2 As an Arts Council of Wales Portfolio client in receipt of revenue funding, £45,000 was allocated from this budget and a further £30,000 secured from the Council via Cabinet.
- 4.3 The report to Cabinet in April 2021 noted that if the pandemic restrictions in Wales eased, there was the potential to screen the production at the theatres as a cinema experience, in addition to the free online offer being made available.

#### **5. 2021 CHRISTMAS OFFER SCREENING**

##### Theatres

- 5.1 The theatres will reopen for cinema screenings in late October/early November 2021, in line with Regulation 16 of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020 for premises open to the public or where work takes place, subject to a robust Covid Risk Assessment.
- 5.2 Further to that risk assessment, RCT Theatres have outlined a reopening plan that enables our historic theatres to reopen cautiously and slowly with an initial capacity that enables systems to be trialled, staff to be further trained and customers to gain confidence by returning in a safe manner.
- 5.3 It is proposed to open our theatres with a maximum of 200 customers by December 2021, with seating in the stalls auditorium only. Alongside the phased approach to opening, we will implement a number of control measures to protect our staff, our customers, our performers and people taking part in organised arts activities within the theatres. These control measures will be regularly reviewed and amended to match Welsh Government, Council guidance and industry best practice.

##### Aladdin Screening

- 5.4 RCT Theatres' traditional pantomime productions are around 2.5 hours in length (including a 20 minute interval). The film of 'Aladdin' will be approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes in length (with no interval).

- 5.5 Once again, RCT Theatres will ensure that the production is fully accessible with captions and BSL.
- 5.6 Our programme of Aladdin will include at least 11 screenings at each theatre, with an offer of both non-socially distanced and socially distanced screenings, providing our communities with an option dependant on their individual preferences.
- 5.7 Tickets for screenings will need to be booked via the theatres in the usual ways but no charge will be levied. The free tickets can be transferred or returned if, for whatever reason, ticket holders cannot attend. The cinema style screenings and the online offer will be promoted in the RCT Theatres Programme of Events.
- 5.8 Offering a free theatre screening alongside the online offer of Aladdin will ensure the magical family Christmas pantomime reaches a wide audience including any digitally excluded residents. It also supports our programme of work to fully re-open our theatres over coming months and encourage our loyal and new customers to return.

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment Screening Assessment indicates a full assessment is not needed.

## **7. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT**

- 7.1 No consultation exercise has been required.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 With a budget of £75,000 secured through £45,000 Arts Council of Wales revenue funding (due to our status as an Arts Portfolio Client) and a further £30,000 from the Council, there is no requirement to recover costs for the production of 'Aladdin'.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 9.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

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

- 10.1 The proposal contributes to the Council's corporate priorities:
- People – such as developing cultural experiences for positive health and wellbeing and; providing cultural experiences for our residents;

- Places – such as providing opportunities to engage with and participate in the arts and creative industries within our communities, town centres and parks and; developing themed bespoke projects;
- Prosperity - such as supporting and developing freelancers; being innovative in our Christmas offer and; fulfilling the sectors potential to culturally serve its community.

10.2 The proposal contributes to the seven national wellbeing goals, particularly:

- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language;
- A prosperous Wales;
- A healthier Wales;
- A Wales of cohesive communities.

10.3 The proposal is consistent with the sustainable approach promoted by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act through the five ways of working:

- Long-term –revenue investment seeks to achieve a long-term and sustainable arts and creative industries infrastructure with the Borough;
- Prevention – engagement and participation opportunities offering early intervention and prevention support;
- Integrated – contributing to a range of local, regional and national strategic priorities by adopting an integrated and coherent approach;
- Collaboration - through working across Council services and public, private and third sector agencies, locally, regionally and nationally;
- Involvement – through consultation, feedback, advisory groups and professional networks.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

11.1 This paper outlines a proposal to screen RCT Theatres’ digital Christmas offer of ‘Aladdin’ at the Coliseum and Park and Dare Theatres in December 2021 with tickets offered free of charge.

11.2 This proposal builds on the existing Cabinet decision that ‘Aladdin’ be made available free of charge via the RCT Theatres’ YouTube channel.

11.3 This proposal is in line with the Council’s traditional Christmas offerings and will add value to what will be an accessible, magical experience that is festively family-friendly within our wonderful RCT Theatres.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**18<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR – PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND  
COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT  
PORTFOLIO HOLDER, CLLR. RHYS LEWIS**

**RCT THEATRES: 2021 CHRISTMAS OFFER SCREENINGS**

**Background Papers**

None

**Officer to contact:**

Caroline O'Neill – Strategic Arts and Culture Manager

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## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CABINET

18<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2021

### LIVING LANDSCAPES PROJECT

#### REPORT OF DIRECTOR – PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CLLR RHYS LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES, WELL-BEING AND CULTURAL SERVICES

**Authors:** Richard Wistow, Ecologist  
Elizabeth Dean, Environment Planner  
Marie Fowler, Green Spaces Development Officer

#### 1. **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Cabinet on progress with the Living Landscapes Project and seek approval for the future progression of the Project to address the climate and biodiversity emergencies.

#### 2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider current progress of the Living Landscapes Project and the work highlighted in this report to further enhance the countryside and natural habitats of Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 2.2 Approve the list and delivery of the 29 sites identified by the Living Landscapes Project and associated funding arrangements.

#### 3. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To enable the Cabinet to consider the progress of the Living Landscapes Project and approve the proposals to promote the sustainable management of natural resources on Council owned land and to engage local communities in the project. The report also highlights to Cabinet where 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<sup>1, 2</sup>.
- 4.2 In November's 2020 'Natures Assets' report to the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group, a number of priorities for the Council to address the climate and biodiversity emergencies were proposed. This report deals specifically with the 'Landscape Strategy Linking Nature Conservation and People' and 'Living Landscape' project described in that report. The project forms an important part of the emerging review of 'Action for Nature', which members will recall is the Plan produced by the Local Nature Partnership to protect and enhance the wildlife and biodiversity of Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 4.3 A Nature's Assets officer group has been set up to take forward actions from the earlier report to the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group. This Group has been instrumental in developing the project and ensuring that the carbon storage and water management elements are addressed, as well as the original biodiversity management and community engagement considerations. The potential funding mechanisms have also been considered by this group.
- 4.4 Landscape Strategy linking nature conservation and people (The Living Landscape Project)
- 4.4.1 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 doorstep. 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. The development of a 'landscape scale' project provides opportunities to access external funding, this being subject to application and approval processes. Initial discussions between Council staff, the Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation and number of local groups has established support for the idea.
- 4.4.2 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, 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'.

A priority 'Action for Nature' action is the development 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.

#### 4.5 Project proposals

- 4.5.1 As its name suggests, this is a landscape scale project proposal that links together a network of biodiversity rich sites, with local communities through sustainable land management and environmental awareness raising and engagement. In RCT the key habitats which support our rich biodiversity are also the same habitats which provide stable, long-term stores of soil carbon and contribute to water management in the landscape. The opportunity exists therefore to manage and look after our key biodiversity resource, engage, and work with local people in their management, and in doing so secure and improve carbon sequestration and water management through better land management and care.
- 4.5.2 The proposed pilot project selects a number of sites from the overall network as a suggested starting point. This would allow a demonstration of the potential for sustainable land management with community involvement, whilst minimising the risk of over-extending staff resources. The pilot will enable the Local Nature Partnership to engage local interest groups and the voluntary Nature Conservation NGOs in practical projects and establish their enthusiasm for on-going involvement. The proposed pilot focuses on capital works to enable the sites to be brought into sustainable management. It also includes basic interpretation to identify the sites as part of the network. The overall objective of the pilot is to demonstrate that long term sustainable management of Council owned land can be undertaken in partnership with community groups and at the same time deliver biodiversity, water management, soil conservation and carbon storage benefits to address the climate and biodiversity emergencies. If the approach is successful, further sites can be added to the network as resources become available.
- 4.5.3 The list of pilot sites has drawn on work by Corporate Estates to identify Council owned land with potential for carbon storage and biodiversity enhancement (and also potentially for water management).
- 4.5.4 For these 29 sites, a schedule of activities has been identified that can be delivered during 2021-22 through seeking external funding and/or from

existing Council resources. These actions are summarised in Table 1 below and include actions that are therefore deliverable in that period together with the potential cost implications.

4.5.5 Beyond this, in the future some additional works may be considered for the 29 sites, as part of future development programme and opportunities for grant aid applications. These may include:

- Small grant aid to help support long-term conservation grazing.
- Provision of mains water connection and drinking troughs on conservation grazing sites as part of summer drought reliance provision.
- Re-wetting of sites through ditch blocking e.g. peatbogs.
- Path and access improvements.
- Invasive species control.
- Developing a Living landscape web page.
- On-going litter removal and disposal.

4.5.6 A number of the chosen sites already have funding for management works from S106 planning agreements. These have not been included in the costings but the sites form an integral part of the network and will be included in all community engagement work.

Table 1- Living Landscapes Project- Proposed Schedule of Works and Estimated Costs

Sites	Signage/ Interpretation	Fencing	Wildflower/ Rhos Pasture Management	Tree/ Woodland Management	Bird/ Bat Boxes	Total	Comments
Llanharan Cemetery	£2,000		£500			<b>£2,500</b>	
Parc Eirin (s106)						<b>£0</b>	No cost to project, funded through S106 Agreement
Llanharry Quarry (s106)	£2,000				£420	<b>£2,420</b>	
Ynysddu	£2,000					<b>£2,000</b>	
Pontyclun Park	£2,000					<b>£2,000</b>	
Pant Marsh (s106)	£4,000					<b>£4,000</b>	
Cefn yr Hendy (s106)						<b>£0</b>	no cost to project, funded through S106 Agreement
Cefn y Parc Cemetery	£2,000		£1,000			<b>£3,000</b>	
Parc Dowlais	£2,000	£800		£500		<b>£3,300</b>	
Llantwit Fardre Marsh	£2,000	£6,400				<b>£8,400</b>	
Cwmfields	£4,000	£14,650		£1,000		<b>£19,650</b>	
Parc Nant Celyn	£2,000	£1,600		£1,000	£700	<b>£5,300</b>	
Ty Rhiw woods, Cemetery and Recreation Ground	£4,000			£1,500	£700	<b>£6,200</b>	
Ynysangharad War Memorial Park	£6,000				£700	<b>£6,700</b>	
Craig yr Hesg Nature Reserve	£2,000			£1,500		<b>£3,500</b>	
Blaenrhondda Park	£2,000			£1,500	£700	<b>£4,200</b>	
Glyncornel	£4,000			£1,500	£700	<b>£6,200</b>	
Darran Park	£4,000			£1,300	£700	<b>£6,000</b>	
Clydach Vale Country Park	£4,000			£2,500		<b>£6,500</b>	
Melin yr Hom	£4,000			£1,500		<b>£5,500</b>	
Cefn Don Recreation Grounds	£2,000			£500		<b>£2,500</b>	
Blaennantygroes Recreation Ground	£2,000					<b>£2,000</b>	
Peace Park	£2,000					<b>£2,000</b>	
Penrhiwceiber Recreation Ground	£2,000			£1,000		<b>£3,000</b>	
Park Lane, top of Aberdare Park						<b>£0</b>	
Dare Valley Country Park	£4,000	£29,200		£1,500		<b>£34,700</b>	Conservation grazing area
Aberdare Cemetery	£2,000		£500			<b>£2,500</b>	
Llwydcoed Crematorium	£4,000		£1,000			<b>£5,000</b>	
Hirwaun Cemetery	£4,000		£500			<b>£4,500</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£76,000</b>	<b>£52,650</b>	<b>£3,500</b>	<b>£16,800</b>	<b>£4,620</b>	<b>£153,570</b>	

#### 4.6 The proposed pilot sites

4.6.1 Sites in the South of the County Borough. The core of the selected sites are part of the closely connected network of Council owned Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and one is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). These sites collectively support and provide vital habitat connectivity for a range priority species, including orchids, marsh fritillary butterflies (and many other insects), bats and dormice. These sites are also close to where people live and are part of the countryside 'on your doorstep'. Some well used sites in the Taf Valley are the focus for biodiversity enhancement. Some sites are already funded via S106 contributions from developers but for the others, the proposed works are currently un-funded or extra funding is sought for specific unfunded activities.

- Llanharan Cemetery, Llanharan – wildflower rich grassland in the heart of the Community.
- Parc Eirin, Tonyrefail – rhos pasture habitat, fencing to allow conservation grazing is funded by an existing S106 agreement.
- Llanharry Quarry, Llanharry – a species rich woodland and grassland limestone quarry open space adjacent to new housing development. Works to improve public access, manage woodland and grassland is available from S106 developer contribution, however extra funding sought for signage.
- Ynysddu, Pontyclun – rhos pasture habitat near the River Ely.
- Pontyclun Park – wildflower rich grassland and butterfly habitat which forms part of this popular community centred park.
- Pant Marsh, Talbot Green – species rich floodplain grassland and wet woodland funded by existing S106 agreement, but cost of signage included in this project.
- Cefn Yr Hendy, Pontyclun – woodland and grassland management funded by S106 Agreement.
- Cefn y Parc Cemetery, Llantrisant – an important flowery meadow within the cemetery managed for the rare green-winged orchid.
- Parc Dowlais, Llantwit Fardre – rhos pasture and woodland adjacent to the R Clun.
- Llantwit Fardre Marsh – rhos pasture and peat bog habitat adjacent to the Church Village by-pass community route.
- Cwm Fields, Llantwit Fardre- rhos pasture near Cwm Colliery Beddau.
- Parc Nant Celyn, Efail Isaf – rhos pasture adjacent to housing in Efail Isaf.
- Ty Rhiw woods, cemetery and recreation ground, Taffs Well – woodland and grassland habitats.
- Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, Pontypridd – enhancement of the 'wildzones' in the Park.
- Craig yr Hesg Local Nature Reserve, Pontypridd - ancient woodland and grassland in close proximity to Graigwen.

4.6.2 Sites in the North of the County Borough fall into two groups, those in Rhondda and those in Cynon. Again, the sites are all SINCS or SSSIs close to

existing built-up areas and provide important habitat connectivity for pollinating (and other) insects, songbirds and bats. They are also accessible countryside areas close to homes and workplaces.

- Blaenrhondda Park – ‘Wild Zone’ area of woodland and grassland within the Park, home to the rare forester moth.
- Glyncornel Local Nature Reserve – ancient Woodland Site of Special Scientific Interest with flower rich meadows adjacent to The Terraces, Llwynypia.
- Darran Park, Ferndale – one of the largest ancient woodland areas in the Rhondda Fach.
- Clydach Vale Country Park, Tonypandy – countryside park on former land reclamation scheme with important coal spoil habitats
- Melin yr Hom, Pentre – wildflower rich ‘Wild Zone’ on the fringes of a recreational ground.
- Cefn Don Recreation Ground, Hirwaun – wildflower ‘Wild Zone’ alongside a football pitch.
- Blaennantgroes Recreation Grounds, Cwmbach – species rich Wild Zone in the park.
- Peace Park – a large area of flower rich floodplain grassland between Mountain Ash Hospital and the Wildlife Trust Reserve, Pwll Waun Cynon
- Penrhiwceiber Recreation Ground – diverse ‘Wild Zone’ within a recreation grounds area.
- Park Farm, Aberdare – Wild Zone with rhos pasture integrated around a former football pitch which is now used as a kickabout area.
- Dare Valley Country Park (conservation grazing area), Aberdare – superb rhos pasture, and wet grassland managed by conservation grazing area within the Country Park
- Aberdare Cemetery - species rich rhos pasture, with potential for marsh fritillary butterflies on the east side of the cemetery.
- Llwydcoed Crematorium - areas of species-rich wet grassland within the crematorium grounds
- Hirwaun Cemetery – wildflower rich habitat next to important marsh fritillary butterfly habitat.

#### 4.7 Type of works proposed in the pilot project

- 4.7.1 A common feature of the proposed works is signage and interpretation. This will allow each site to be identified as part of the network and will describe the key habitat features and biodiversity value.
- 4.7.2 Where sites are proposed for conservation grazing, fencing, stock handling and water provision are essential requirements. Field gates and kissing gates are also required to maintain access.
- 4.7.3 On a number of sites, woodland management works are required for public safety, tree health, hedgerow management and to protect fence lines.

4.7.4 On cemetery sites where wildflower grassland management is being introduced, purpose designed composting facilities are an important aesthetic component of the project. At a number of sites, bird boxes are proposed to increase nesting opportunities for specific species.

## **5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

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

## **6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no welsh language implications arising from this report.

## **7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

7.1 As mentioned before, the Living Landscape project has been developed by the Local Nature Partnership as a means of achieving biodiversity management and community engagement across a wide range of linked sites. The partnership includes representatives from public bodies such as NRW, Health Improvement Wales and Transport for Wales as well as wildlife NGOs like the Wildlife Trust, Buglife, Glamorgan Bird Club and Butterfly Conservation and local community groups and individuals. The Partnership is currently supported by Welsh Government funding for a part-time Co-ordinator (to March 2022), shared with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. The Partnership will be central to successful implementation.

7.2 The voluntary sector non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are a key resource of specific expertise and local knowledge. We are fortunate in RCT that there is an active and knowledgeable volunteer naturalist community. The involvement of the NGOs provides an opportunity to use the project sites to engage more people, especially those who live locally or use the sites for recreation and develop the skills of the next generation of local naturalists.

7.3 Existing community groups, some very informal, are associated with a number of these sites. The Cambrian Trust is an example of a formal group leasing land at Clydach Vale Country Park. They are keen to become involved in biodiversity activities in other areas of the Park. At Parc Nant Celyn, some local residents have become informal 'stock checkers', keeping an eye on the cows.

7.4 The pilot sites are all in Council ownership but there is potential for the network to expand. Sites would remain the responsibility of the owner but joining the network could provide access to shared expertise and community participation. The S106 sites in developer ownership are a particular example, where the developer is committed by the planning agreement to biodiversity management works on the site for, typically, 25 years. Inclusion in the network would help the developer/management company to meet their obligations with the support of local groups and the wider partnership. The Wildlife Trust and



Community Councils might also have sites that would contribute to the network.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 8.1 Funding for the active management of Council owned land for biodiversity has been severely limited since the direct grant from the Countryside Council for Wales ceased and austerity reduced budgets and staffing levels. The Climate and Biodiversity Emergencies have highlighted the need for countryside management and this is supported by the Environment (Wales) Act's focus on the sustainable management of natural resources and in particular the 'Biodiversity Duty' for public bodies including the Council.
- 8.2 The total estimated cost of the pilot is £154k and it is proposed to fund the work identified through external funding, and where required, from within existing Council resources,
- 8.3 With regard to external funding opportunities, in 2020/21, Welsh Government made funding for Green Recovery projects available at short notice and with a compressed expenditure timeframe. It is possible that similar funding may be available this year (2021/22) and the costs associated with this project may be funded by that grant if the opportunity arises. The types of work proposed are all deliverable during the second half of the 2021/22 financial year if required.
- 8.4 The Heritage Lottery provides another opportunity for funding, over a longer timeframe, which the Council may wish to explore. In addition to the capital works identified here, this may provide an opportunity to fund works with a longer lead-in or seasonal timing, and develop the community engagement aspects of the pilot, such as training, skills sharing, equipment, volunteering, support for local groups, networking, social media etc.
- 8.5 Following the consideration of the Nature's Assets report by the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group last year, Cabinet has already approved additional funding for the Countryside and Ecology Service and the Council has successfully recruited an ecology graduate and two biodiversity apprentices, who commenced in September 2021. These posts will support the delivery of the Living Landscape Project as well as expanding the wildflower grassland management programme and the implementation of the Council's Biodiversity Duty (s.6 Environment (Wales) Act).
- 8.6 Grant aid is often restricted to capital funding and the Council will need to consider the longer-term revenue implications and further reports outlining any such implications will be prepared for Cabinet consideration as required. Future revenue funding may be particularly important for engaging local communities, developing events and practical works programmes and providing training for volunteers.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 9.1 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.

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

- 10.1 The proposed Living Landscape pilot considered in this report contributes to the Council's priorities as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan for 2020 to 2024. Specifically, it contributes to 'People' by Encouraging all residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental wellbeing and to 'Places' by Getting the best out of our parks by looking after and investing in our greenspaces and specifically. Delivering natural carbon storage solutions such as those provided by trees, peat bogs, marshy grassland and other natural habitats across the County Borough to enhance air quality and reduce the impact of greenhouse gasses.

- 10.2 It also reflects the five ways of working in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Sustainable management is based on long-term considerations and is focused on preventative and precautionary action. The pilot project aims to involve all the relevant stakeholders and to integrate the biodiversity, carbon, water and community benefits in the proposed works. 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.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 The Nature's Assets Officer Group convened by the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group has made significant progress in developing the Living Landscapes Project proposal. The Project has identified key programmes of work across 29 potential locations that will be of significant benefit to promoting the biodiversity of areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 11.2 Cabinet is asked to consider the work undertaken to date for this Project and give approval for Officers to progress appropriate external funding applications related to the Pilot areas and deliver the Pilot phase of the Project as set out in the report.

### **References:**

1. Biodiversity tour of Rhondda Cynon Taf  
<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/PlanningandBuildingControl/Countryside/Biodiversity/relateddocs/BiodiversityTourofRCTDocument.pdf>

2. Cwm Taf Well-being Plan evidence base  
<http://www.ourcwmtaf.wales/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=181&mid=44&fileid=37>

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**18<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2021**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR – PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CLLR RHYS LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES, WELL-BEING AND CULTURAL SERVICES**

**LIVING LANDSCAPES PROJECT**

**Officer to contact:**

Richard Wistow, Ecologist

## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CABINET

18<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021

#### A REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO TACKLING EMPTY HOMES, WHICH IS SET OUT IN THE EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY FOR THE PERIOD 2018-2021

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT, IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNCILLOR R BEVAN

**AUTHOR: DEREK JAMES – SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT**

<b>Appendices:</b> Empty Homes Strategy (2018-2021)	Appendix A
Empty Homes Action Plan	Appendix B
Landlord Newsletter (2021)	Appendix C
Empty Homes Case Study	Appendix D
VTF Empty Homes Grant Case Study	Appendix E

#### **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

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

#### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the information contained within this report and the progress made in bringing empty properties back into use in line with the RCT Empty Homes Strategy.
- 2.2 Approve for the current RCT Empty Homes Strategy to be extended until March 2022, with a new strategy being developed for implementation in April 2022.

### **3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic has caused some challenges and disruption with regards to the Council's approach to tackling empty homes across RCT, it is important to note the positive work that has been delivered and the outcomes achieved against the strategy.
- 3.2 The current RCT Empty Homes Strategy is coming to an end therefore, extending the current strategy will allow time for a new strategy to be developed in readiness for implementation in April 2022. The Empty Homes Strategy provides clear structure and guidance to facilitate the continuation of bringing empty homes back into use.

### **4.0 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Empty private sector homes represent a wasted resource, financial expense both to the owners and the Council and in many cases a missed opportunity to provide much needed affordable housing for residents. Not only are they a waste of a valuable housing resource, but they can cause blight to communities and distress to residents affected by their unsightly appearance and propensity to attract crime and anti-social behaviour.
- 4.2 Council Tax records, from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017, revealed that there were 3,556 private sector homes that were vacant for six months or more. This equated to 3.8% of Rhondda Cynon Taf's private housing (owner occupied and private rented) stock. The average for Wales in 2017/2018 was 2.4% with the lowest (Torfaen) having 0.78% of their stock empty.
- 4.3 Whilst, RCT was above the Welsh average and did have the highest number of empty homes in Wales, this was primarily due to level of 'churn' in the housing market, rather than persistent long term empty homes. For example, in the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 snapshot 59% of homes that were empty had been vacant for less than three years and in total **only 684 (9%) homes** appeared as empty in the last four successive snapshots (i.e., in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017). Most significantly, 4,463 homes (60% of the total across the four years) appeared on only one of the snapshots. As such, the bulk of homes recorded over 4-year period were only empty for short periods before returning back into use through purchase or rental. Conversely, only a minority of homes (6%) were re-recorded as empty again after being brought back into use over this period.
- 4.4 The 684 empty homes that were identified as being empty, in all four snapshots, were identified as a focus for the Council's enforcement and enabling activity.

- 4.5 As a result, on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Cabinet approved an Empty Homes Strategy for the period 2018-2021, which aimed to make a difference to both the scale of empty homes that are brought back into use as well as having a more fundamental impact on the total number in order to reverse the trend in a more sustainable way.

## **5.0 THE STRATEGY**

- 5.1 The Strategy (**Appendix A**), sets out 5 objectives that are clear, deliverable and aim to make a difference to both the scale of empty homes that are brought back into use as well as having a more fundamental impact on the total number in order to reverse the trend in a sustainable way.

- 5.2 The objectives are:

- 1. To develop partnerships and vehicles that will enable an increase in the scale of empty homes being brought back into use.**
- 2. To maximise the use of current funding and identify further funding models to increase the number of empty homes that are brought back into use.**
- 3. To continue to use a range of interventions to ensure all types of empty homes are targeted and enabled to be brought back into use and monitor the outcomes related to these closely.**
- 4. To undertake further research in communities and evaluation of existing schemes to understand why there are a high number of empty homes.**
- 5. To identify possible solutions that could prevent homes from becoming empty and also develop interventions for different market areas and types.**

## **6.0 PROGRESS UPDATE**

- 6.1 Since the report to Cabinet, a considerable amount of good work has been undertaken over the last 2 years. This includes;

### **Strategic direction and governance**

- 6.2 Following the approval of the Empty Homes Strategy by Cabinet, a Multi-Agency Empty Homes Operational Group (**EHOG**) was established and has continued to meet quarterly. The purpose of the EHOG is to ensure

that a coherent and structured approach to tackling Empty Homes is implemented. The group oversees and monitors the delivery of the Empty Home Action Plan, to ensure the delivery of the objectives set out within the strategy.

- 6.3 During the pandemic the EHO has continued to meet digitally via Microsoft teams and continued to implement and monitor the actions in the Empty Homes Action Plan 2020/2021.

### **Long Term Empty Properties**

- 6.4 A priority within the Empty Homes Action Plan is to bring long-term empty properties back into use; these are properties that have continued to be vacant over a 4-year period. By analysing the empty properties data, **684 long-term empty properties** were identified in RCT. A targeted approach was implemented in order to bring these properties back into use by delivering interventions to cohorts of long-term properties. The interventions included telephone calls to the homeowner, letters sent to the homeowner and visits to the homeowner providing advice and support on opportunities available to bring the property back onto use. As part of the intervention work, enforcement action has also been undertaken, including taking action to deal with accumulations of waste, repairing defects and securing properties to prevent unauthorised access.
- 6.5 The Council also has powers, which it may determine to use, to charge a Premium to be paid in addition to the standard level of Council Tax which is payable on long term empty properties which aligns to the objective of bringing them back into occupation.
- 6.6 As of the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, **510 (75%)** of the long-term empty properties have received an inspection and all owners have received letters offering assistance and/or enforcement if necessary, in order to help bring them back into use. Of the 510 long term empty properties, **297 (58%)** have been brought back into use. This has been achieved as a direct result of the Environmental Housing Officer's (EHO's) interventions, various loans and grants and the proactive work undertaken by Housing Strategy officers working in partnership with landlords, via the landlord forum and RSL's. It is also noted that from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018, owners of long-term empty dwellings have been required to pay a full council tax bill (i.e. no discount is allowed). A further **91** properties have been brought back into use by themselves.

### **Houses into Homes Loan**

- 6.7 The Houses into Homes loan is a Welsh Government funded scheme which provides a loan to help return privately owned empty properties back into use. The scheme is designed for applicants who want to rent



or sell their property on completion of the refurbishment works. The loan must be repaid on sale or within 2 years from the date of loan approval, whichever is sooner, or within 3 years from the date of the loan approval if the property is for rent.

- 6.8 As of the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, **126** Houses into Homes loans have been approved, totalling **£3.7m** of loans awarded, creating **175 homes** from privately owned empty properties. The scheme continues to be well subscribed.
- 6.9 The 175 homes that have been created from the £3.7M of loans, we all delivered by local contractors. Therefore, the investment made through the Houses into Homes loans is contributing to the local economy providing a valuable work programme to local building/contractors at a very challenging time.

### **Valleys Taskforce Empty Homes Grant Scheme**

- 6.10 Following recognition of the success of the RCT Empty Homes Grant, the Valleys Taskforce agreed to commit **£10M** to fund bringing Empty Homes back into use. RCT Council were appointed as the lead authority due to the expertise held following on from the RCT successful Empty Homes Grant initiative and model of delivery. Local Authorities in the Valleys Taskforce Area include, Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Torfaen and parts of Carmarthenshire, Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea.
- 6.11 The Valleys Taskforce Empty Homes grant was made available to prospective owner occupiers who intended to occupy an empty home as their main residence, for a minimum 5-year period. To have qualified, the empty home must have been registered as vacant with the Local Authority's Council Tax Department for a minimum of 6 months. Applicants were required to make a mandatory contribution of 15% of the total cost of eligible works (capped at £3,000). There was also a discretion to waive the 15% contribution in exceptional circumstances such as financial hardship, where the applicant could demonstrate that they are in receipt of an income related benefit.
- 6.12 The Grant was available for essential repair work to make properties safe, secure, and free from any category one hazards. During phase 1 the maximum grant award towards the cost of work was £20,000. As part of phase 2, applicants could receive a maximum £25,000 grant. The additional £5,000 was specifically to support any **suitable renewable energy measures** that may be appropriate for the home.
- 6.13 As of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, a total of **1076** applications were received from across **all** VTF authorities, of which, **941** were deemed valid applications. Of the **941** valid applications, **503** continued with the grant

process and have been approved, with a further **34** at pre-approval stage. The grant commitment at the end of the financial year 2020/2021 was showing full spend against the £10M budget, this resulted in the initial £10M budget for the scheme being increased by WG (additional £2M) in order to meet the number of applications received. The scheme also levered in an additional committed **investment of £3M** from homeowners in order to bring the empty properties back into use. The average grant awarded to applicants was £19,955.49 (prior to mandatory contributions).

- 6.14 RCT received **557 (53%)** applications, of which **494 (87%)** were valid applications. This has resulted in almost **£5.5M** of the grant funding being committed to residents of RCT in order to bring empty homes back into use, an impressive **55%** of the overall budget.
- 6.15 It is also important to note that as of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, **68** (56 from RCT) homes across the VTF area have completed on their grant and have been brought back into use, **with 92 local contractors (VTF areas)** involved, **67%** of these are RCT based contractors, resulting in these works generating nearly **80,000 hours of employment** through the grant. Therefore, the investment made through the Valleys Taskforce Empty Homes Grant Scheme is contributing to the local economy providing a valuable work programme to local building/contractors at a very challenging time.
- 6.16 Of the 503 homes that will have been brought back into use by the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, the vast majority of homes have had energy efficient measures installed. Therefore, the scheme supports our efforts to tackle fuel poverty and to create a clean, green and sustainable places to live, fulfilling our obligations to decarbonise housing in Wales as we work towards achieving net zero by 2050.
- 6.17 The Valleys Taskforce have referred to the Empty Homes Grant scheme as their 'flagship scheme' under the Taskforce's main priority for housing. Although applications for the scheme closed at the end of March 2021, from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 RCT re-opened its own Empty Homes Grant and is committed to supporting residents to bring empty homes back in to use.

### **Homestep Plus Scheme**

- 6.18 The Homestep Plus scheme is a partnership with United Welsh Housing Association where empty properties in the CF37 postcode area are purchased and renovated and then sold to first time buyers at 70% of the market value. A total of 22 empty properties have been brought back into use through the Homestep Plus scheme.

### **RCT Landlord Forum**

- 6.19 The Housing Strategy Department hosts the RCT Landlord Forum, which is held quarterly and attended by approximately **40 landlords**. The Forum enables the Council to engage directly with landlords and potential investors in the County Borough to share information and work together to reduce the number of empty properties in RCT. During the Pandemic, the Forum was held virtually and therefore communication with landlords has continued with discussions being held around opportunities to bring empty properties back into use.
- 6.20 A Landlord newsletter (**Appendix C**) is also published twice a year, which has been utilised to inform landlords of the Housing into Homes Loan and also the Council's Homestep Plus scheme.

### **Working with RSL's and other partners**

- 6.21 In addition to bringing Empty Homes back into use, we are also working with RSLs and other partners to bring empty commercial space back into use in our town centres. These are complex schemes, which often require a number of interventions. These include; Oxford Buildings in Mountain town centre, the Boot, the Black lion and the Former NatWest Bank in Aberdare town centre, 122-126 Dunraven Street and the Former Co-op in Tonypany town centre, the Sorting Office in Treorchy town centre and finally we have a range of significant projects including 54 – 55 Taff Street, 56 – 58 Taff Street, 9a High Street, 9a Gelliwastad Road and the upper floors of the Principality Building on High Street in Pontypridd town centre.

## **7.0 IMPACT**

- 7.1 The Council's approach to tackling empty homes is having a positive impact on the number of empty homes across the borough. There have been **1,144 interventions** delivered over the last 2 years, which is above the provisional target of 400 per year; this has helped to bring **501** properties back into use. An intervention is defined as one of the following actions:

- Enforcement:
- Direct advice or guidance:
- Grants, loans or other financial assistance either to provided or facilitated by the Council
- Power of sale - this is another effective tool to deal with long term empty properties, especially larger derelict buildings. However, these properties tend to be problematic and can be time consuming to deal with. In the last 12 months the Embassy Hotel in Gelli, and Elim Church have all been sold at auction.

- 7.2 Council tax records show that between 2017/2018 and 2020-21, the period the Empty Homes Strategy has been implemented, the number of empty homes across the borough has reduced from **3,556 to 2,870, a reduction of 19% or 686 properties**. In the context of the Pandemic, and the resultant disruption to the housing market, this can be seen as a positive outcome.
- 7.3 RCT's approach to tackling empty homes was recognised by Welsh Government and in particular the Valley's Taskforce, as sector leading.
- 7.4 Due to the success of the RCT Empty Homes Strategy and in light of the Pandemic it is proposed to extend the strategy until March 2022. With a new RCT Empty Homes Strategy being implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/ SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

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

## **9.0 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There is no requirement for a Welsh Language Impact Assessment with this report.

## **10.0 CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

- 10.1 A consultation exercise is not required

## **11.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 11.1 There are currently no financial implications aligned to this report. WG funding has been awarded to the Council for the existing Houses into Homes loan scheme and the Council was made available £10 million of capital funding for the Valleys Taskforce Empty Property Grant.
- 11.2 However, it is important to note that the RCT Empty Homes Capital Budget of £1.2million for 2021/2022 has already been committed, only 3 months into the financial year, therefore opportunities for further funding are being explored by the council.

## **12.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

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

## **13.0 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

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

13.2 As such, the Empty Homes Strategy will continue to contribute to the delivery all three of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities of economy, people and place. The Strategy will also continue to assist the Council to contribute to three of the seven wellbeing goals that 'The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' puts in place as follows:

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

## **14.0 CONCLUSION**

14.1 The Empty Homes Strategy has been implemented for 2 years and has provided a framework for all empty homes activity, ensuring a co-ordinated approach.

14.2 The strategy enables the positive work undertaken over recent years to be built on in order to decrease the total number of empty homes in the County Borough overall. The empty homes data for 2020/2021 clearly evidences that the Empty Homes Strategy and working collaboratively with partners, is being successful in having a positive impact on reducing the number of empty homes across RCT.

14.3 It is clear that the investment made through the Valleys Taskforce Empty Homes Grant Scheme and the Houses int Homes Loan has contributed to the local economy providing valuable work opportunities to local building/contractors at a very challenging time.

- 14.4 The report also evidences that both the Valleys Taskforce Empty Homes Grant Scheme and the Houses into Homes Loan support efforts to tackle fuel poverty and to create a clean, green and sustainable place to live, fulfilling our obligations to decarbonise housing in Wales as we work towards achieving net zero by 2050.

***Other information:-***

***Relevant Scrutiny Committee***  
*Finance and Performance Scrutiny*

***Contact Officer:***  
*Derek James, Service Director*

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**18 OCTOBER 2021**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT, IN  
DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER  
COUNCILLOR R BEVAN**

**Item:**

**Background Papers**

None

Officer to contact:

Derek James, Service Director

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## **Rhondda Cynon Taf Empty Homes Strategy**

**2018-2021**

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background and strategic drivers

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

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

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

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

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

1. A healthier Wales

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

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

## **1.2 National Context**

According to Welsh Government statistics, there are an estimated 1.4 million dwellings in Wales as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. During 2016-2017 23,303 of these had been vacant for more than six months. Of these, 255 were brought back into use in 2017-18.<sup>1</sup> Empty homes represent a wasted resource, financial expense and in many cases a missed opportunity to provide much needed affordable housing for people in Wales. Not only are they a waste of a valuable housing resource, but they can cause blight to communities and distress to residents affected by their unsightly appearance and propensity to attract crime, vandals and anti social behaviour. In addition to this, living next door to an empty home can devalue a home by as much as 18% and unsightly homes deter investment in an area and leads to a more general cycle of decline.<sup>2</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Welsh Government

<sup>2</sup> Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors

<sup>3</sup> Chartered Institute of Housing – Information leaflet

can also be a more economically viable option to new build".<sup>4</sup> For this reason, the Welsh Government has set an equally ambitious target of 5000 empty homes to be brought back into use across Wales in the same period and RCT is required to contribute to this target.

### **1.3 Local Context**

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

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

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

This data reveals some interesting trends to help illuminate the related problems in the County Borough. Firstly, 684 empty homes have now been identified as having appeared on all four snapshots without returning into beneficial use. These are likely

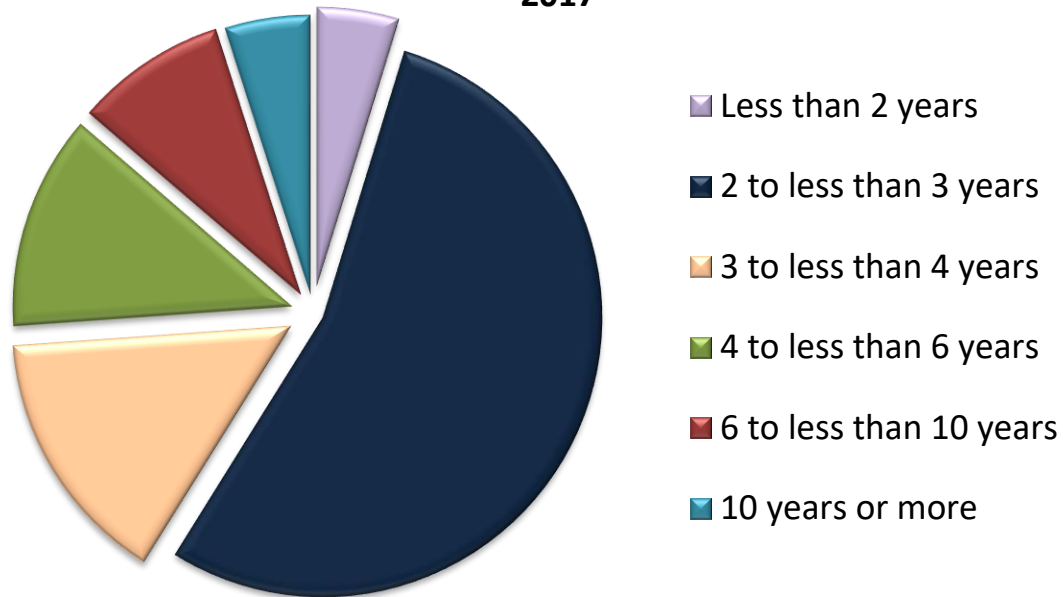
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<sup>4</sup> Empty Homes Agency (2016)

<sup>5</sup> Source: Welsh Government key statistics

to be some of the most problematic empty homes in the County Borough, although they are a relatively minor element of the overall issue. Appendix 2 shows the location of these 684 'long term' empty homes. Secondly, whilst RCT does have amongst the highest numbers of empty homes in Wales at any given point, this is primarily due to level of 'churn' in the housing market, rather than persistent long term empty homes.

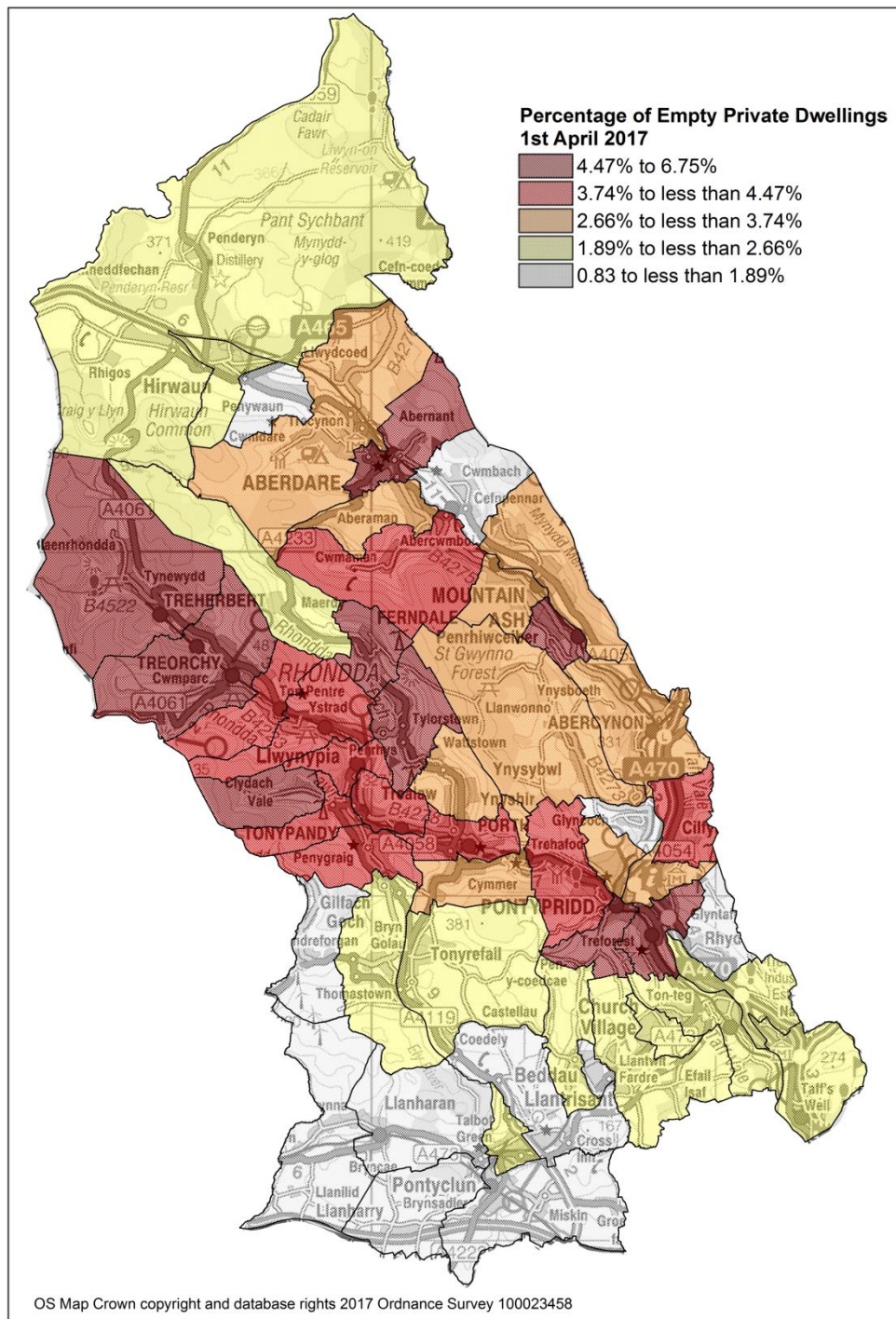
**Figure 1: Long Term Empty Property Void Time as at 1st April 2017**



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



**Figure 2: Percentages of Private Sector Empty Homes by Ward**



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

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

## **2. Challenges to bringing empty homes back into use.**

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

### **2.1 Lack of local demand for homes**

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

### **2.2 Housing market conditions**

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

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<sup>6</sup> Local Housing Market Assessment

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

### **2.3 Owner inertia**

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

### **2.4 Poor condition of empty homes**

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

## **3. Housing Need**

### **3.1 Local Housing Market Assessment**

The Welsh Government defines housing need as:

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

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



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

### **3.2 Homelessness**

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

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

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

## **4. The Financial Cost of Empty Homes**

### **4.1 Cost Implications for Owners of Empty Homes**

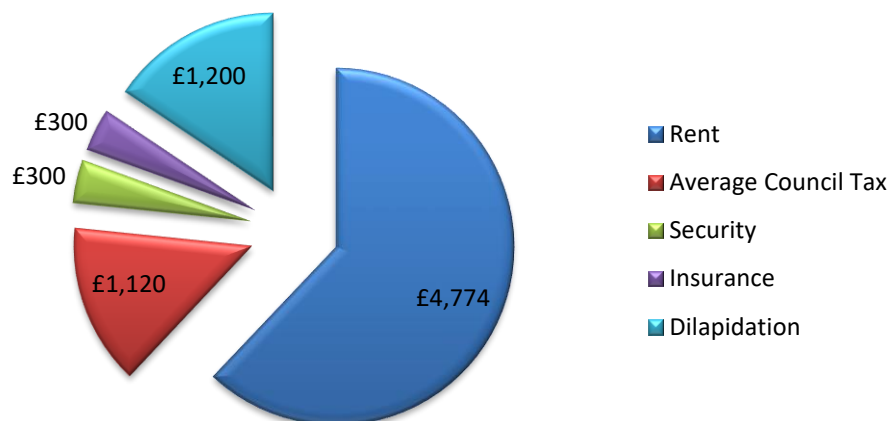
Not only are long term empty homes a drain on council resources and a wasted resource in a time of meeting housing need, they are a cost burden on the owner of

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<sup>7</sup> Source: Welsh Government

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

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



## 5. Enforcement Solutions and Legislative Framework

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

The main options that are available to Councils include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- **Housing Act 2004**

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

Empty Dwelling Management Orders are also available and could be considered for long-term empty homes as a last resort against un-cooperative property owners. The rental income would repay the Council costs associated with enforcing the order and managing the property for a period of up to 7 years. At the end of the lease the habitable property would be handed back to the owner. This procedure would only be practical in areas of housing need and would require a housing association partner to provide the management as the Council does not have any of its own housing stock.

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

- **Housing Act 1985, Section 17**

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

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

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

## **6. Recent Activity**

### **6.1 Proactive Approaches**

#### *6.1.1 Empty Homes Officers*

Over the last few years, the Council has increased its proactive approach to dealing with empty homes and now has two Empty Homes Officers working full time to tackle the issue. A comprehensive database of empty homes is kept, based on Council tax records and any property which has been empty for more than six months as at 1<sup>st</sup> April is captured on this database, in conjunction with other known long term empty homes. Part of the remit of the Empty Homes Officer is to identify ownership and legal responsibility of problematic empty homes, and to work with the owners or their estates to bring these back into use. Any direct actions taken by the Council or its partners on its behalf, which can lead to individual dwellings, being returned to occupation is

recorded and the database is used to provide yearly performance indicator statistics and to monitor performance.

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

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

#### 6.1.2 *Raising Awareness*

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

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

## **6.2 Funding Options**

The Council has a number of funding options available to owners of empty homes to encourage them to be brought back into use. The options recognise that apart from encouraging home owners to utilise their asset, the commercial sector also represents

a particular area where properties are underused along with the residential upper floors of retail premises.

### *6.2.1 Homes above Retail Premises*

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

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

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

### *6.2.2 Empty Property Grant*

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

### *6.2.3 Houses into Homes Loan*

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

of loan approval, which ever is sooner, or within 3 years from the date of the loan approval if the property is for rent.

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

#### *6.2.4 Affordable Housing*

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

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

Since 2015, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and United Welsh Housing Association have worked together to deliver a new Homestep Plus scheme with funding from the Welsh Government's Vibrant and Viable Places programme. The scheme enables United Welsh to identify and buy empty homes in the CF37 postcode area and to refurbish them before offering them for sale at 70% of the asking price. Alternatively, residents can identify their own property, which United Welsh will purchase on their behalf and

sell on at the discounted price. Funding is available to purchase 24 homes up until March 2019, and as with the previous scheme, monies accrued on future sales will be recycled to facilitate additional purchases.

#### *6.2.5 Targeted Community Approaches*

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

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

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

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

#### *6.2.6 Advice, Education and Information*

It was acknowledged that there is scope for the Council to proactively assist the market by focussing on the most problematic empty homes as well as those that can be most



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

#### *6.2.7 Dedicated Web Page*

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

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

### **6.3 Performance**

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

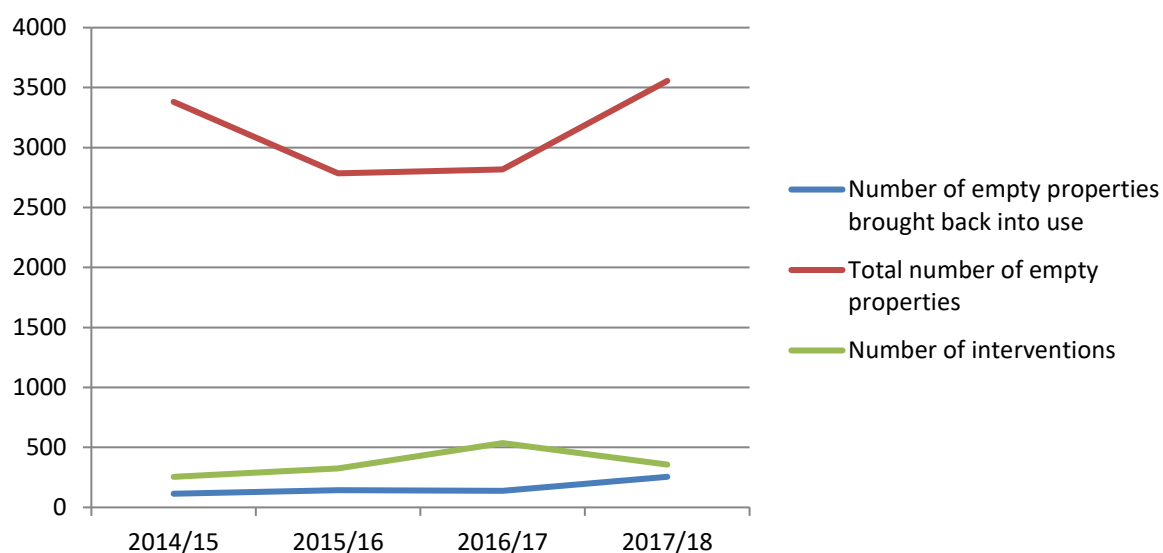
The latest analysis in 2017-18 identified that there are 3556 private sector empty homes in Rhondda Cynon Taf. As per Performance Indicator definition PAM13, this figure consists of the Council Tax exemption classes of, A, C F, G, L and Q but excludes homes under renovation and homes classed as second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

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

**Figure 4: Council performance in relation to empty homes**

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

**Figure 5: Comparison of Council Performance by year**



It should be noted that Rhondda Cynon Taf only counts empty homes that have been brought back into use as a consequence of direct action by the Council e.g. enforcement or financial assistance in accordance with the national performance indicator definition. This definition was changed for 2017/18 both in terms of the type

of empty homes that can be counted and the type of action. This has meant that the council's total number of empty homes appears to have grown significantly between 2016-17 and 2017-18. However, the two data sets are not strictly comparable because of the change in the types of empty home that can be counted. The graph does however demonstrate the gradual improvement each year in the total number of empty homes that have been brought back into use per year both in real terms and as a percentage. Notably, in 2017-18 less interventions resulted in more homes being brought back into use, perhaps evidence of the benefits of a more targeted approach.

## **7. Strategic Aims**

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

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

The strategic aims are:

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

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

Responsibilities for the various interventions and approaches for empty homes are shared across two departments in the Council. The 'Housing Grants and Strategy Team' located with the Regeneration and Planning department is responsible for

overall delivery of the strategy, developing an action plan and monitoring outcomes. It is also responsible for developing and delivering funding models and any other vehicles designed to bring empty homes back into use. Meanwhile, the Council's 'Housing Standards Team' located with the Public Health and Protection department is responsible for the provision of advice, assistance and enforcement activity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **8. Action Plan and Monitoring**

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

## Appendix 1: Case Studies

### Case Study 1: Houses into Homes Loan

The Forest Hotel, Treforest, Pontypridd:

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



## Case Study 2: Homestep Plus

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





### Case Study 3: Treforest Targeted Approach

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

**Before**



**After**



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

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

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

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**APPENDIX B**

**Empty Homes Action Plan: April 2020 – March 2021**

Strategic Objective 1	To develop partnerships and vehicles that will enable an increase in the scale of empty properties being brought back into use				
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Progress
Establish an Empty Homes Operational Group (EHOG) to deliver the aims and objectives of the Empty Property Strategy	Seek approval for establishment of group and develop Terms of Reference and membership	Group set up and attended by members	First convened on 15/11/18	Housing Strategy	Empty Homes Operational group set up and chaired by Housing Strategy. Terms of reference and membership complete.
	Coordinate EHOG meetings every quarter in order to implement and monitor the delivery of the first year action plan	Key stakeholders embrace and deliver the strategic aims and objectives	Ongoing	Housing Strategy	8 meetings have taken place to date. The meetings have been a successful method of co-ordinating the aims and objectives of the strategy. NB: Continuity of meetings have been through Microsoft Teams due to Covid
Liaise with speculative investors who wish to acquire properties within RCT to let to members of the public	Continue to organise the RCT Landlord Forum, setting agendas, booking venues for meetings and collating minutes.	The number of members attending the Landlord forums. Feedback from the landlords attending the meetings.	Ongoing	Housing Strategy	Landlord Forums have taken place with an average of 40 Landlords in attendance. These are now being conducted online. There is also a Landlord Newsletter.

	Attend RCT Landlord Forum to present Houses into Homes loans scheme	Increase in the number of Houses into Homes loan applications	May 2019 & March 2020	Housing Strategy	130 grants have now been approved. 86 have been approved since April 2018.
	Maintain database of empty property investors	Increase in the number of empty property referrals to investors	Ongoing	Public Health and Protection	The number of referrals is not currently recorded.

<b>Strategic Objective 2</b>					
<b>To maximise the use of current funding and identify further funding models to increase the number of empty properties that are brought back into use</b>					
<b>Actions that will deliver this objective</b>	<b>Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action</b>	<b>Measures of Success</b>	<b>Delivery Date</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Identify and engage with empty property owners to investigate ways of returning empty homes back into use	To continue to provide Empty Homes Grants to assist owners to renovate empty properties by promoting the scheme through posters/fliers, the council website and social media platforms.	Increase in the percentage of empty properties brought back into use	Ongoing	Housing Strategy and Grants	Increase in the % of empties brought back into use from 6% in 2019/20 to 8% in 2020/21
Deliver the Homestep Plus Scheme	To continue to work with United Welsh to deliver Homestep Plus scheme in CF37 area	Target of 24 properties purchased and sold under Homestep Plus Scheme	Ongoing	Housing Strategy	24 properties have been identified, of which we are awaiting confirmation of the purchase of 2
	Explore opportunities to deliver Homestep Plus in other areas of RCT	Areas identified to deliver Homestep Plus	March 2020	Housing Strategy	Not complete
Identify suitable empty properties and buildings in town centres and key settlements that could utilise funding	Map empty properties in priority regeneration town centres	Empty properties in regeneration town centres identified	Dec-19 - Ongoing	Housing Strategy	Empty properties have been mapped for Porth. All empty properties are mapped on MapInfo however this does not include commercial empty properties.

	Identify suitable funding opportunities for mapped empty properties	Analysis undertaken of potential funding for each empty property	Ongoing	Housing Strategy	Work continues with Regeneration team to maximise funding opportunities in this area.
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<b>Strategic Objective 3</b>					
<b>To continue to use a range of interventions to ensure all types of empty properties are targeted and enabled to be brought back into use and monitor the outcomes related to these closely</b>					
<b>Actions that will deliver this objective</b>	<b>Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action</b>	<b>Measures of Success</b>	<b>Delivery Date</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Progress</b>
A commitment to use appropriate enforcement powers where suitable	Develop an enforcement approach to deal with owners of empty properties who do not voluntarily engage in the opportunities available to bring their properties back into use	Increase in the use of enforced sales, compulsory purchase and empty dwelling management orders and a subsequent reduction in the number of problem dwellings within RCT	March-20 - Ongoing	EHOG	11 properties have had enforcement notices served since priority empty property visits have taken place.
		Decrease in the number of complaints received regarding empty properties	Ongoing	Public Health and Protection	Report needs to be set up to record this. Ongoing.
	Establish a more proactive and targeted approach to enforcement	Decrease in the number of empty properties	Ongoing	Public Health and Protection	Slight increase in the number of empty properties recorded
Provide up to date advice and assistance to bring empty properties back into use	Establish an Empty Homes webpage to include an empty property market place where sellers can advertise and buyers make direct contact	Number of web page visits	March-20 - Ongoing	EPOG	Meeting to be set up with Marketing and Customer Service Teams

	Produce an Empty Property Advice Pack for empty property owners	Number of empty properties brought back into use	Nov-19	EPOG	Completed
	Promotion of Empty Property Advice pack	Empty Property Advice pack available on Council's webpage	Dec-19	Housing Strategy	Completed
		Empty Property Advice pack available on Empty Homes webpage	March-20	Housing Strategy	Completed
		Promotion of Empty Property Advice pack on Council's Facebook page	Dec-19	Housing Strategy	Ongoing
	Develop online reporting of an empty property and a dedicated empty property inbox	Number of empty properties reported on line via Council's website	Marc-20	Housing Strategy	Reporting mechanism ongoing. Inbox is now functioning

<b>Strategic Objective 4</b>	<b>To undertake further research in communities and evaluation of existing schemes to understand why there are a high number of empty properties and identify possible solutions that could prevent properties from becoming empty</b>				
<b>Actions that will deliver this objective</b>	<b>Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action</b>	<b>Measures of Success</b>	<b>Delivery Date</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Share best practice with other local authorities/WG	Investigate benchmarking opportunities	Better understanding of empty property problem within RCT and neighbouring authorities	March-20	Housing Strategy	Ongoing commitment to use best practice from other local authorities.
	Roll out of Empty Homes Grant to Valleys Task Force	Number of empty home brought back into use across the 9 LA's that make up the Valleys Taskforce	October 2019 – launch month	Housing Grants	As of 31 March 2021, a total of 1076 applications were received of which, 941 were deemed valid. Of the 941 valid applications, 503



					continued with the grant process and have been approved, with a further 34 at pre-approval stage.
Maintain and monitor the Empty Property database	Record and report on the number of empty properties brought back into use through direct action by the Council	Increase in the number of interventions undertaken	Ongoing	Housing Strategy/Public Health and Protection	Number of interventions decreased from <b>467</b> in 2019/20 to <b>357</b> in 2020/21, however Officer resource was redeployed to track and trace during the Pandemic
		Increase in the number of empty properties brought back into use through interventions undertaken	Ongoing	Housing Strategy/Public Health and Protection	Increase from <b>179</b> in 2019/20 to <b>240</b> in 2020/21
	Report empty property PI to Welsh Government	Benchmark performance at an All Wales level	Ongoing	Housing Strategy	In 2020/2021 RCT brought a total of 240 ( <b>8.4%</b> ) empty homes back into use, directly from Council intervention, National Benchmarking data for 2020-21 is not currently available.
Identify the reason why the number of empty properties remains relatively static in RCT	Undertake research to identify the reasons why the same number of empty properties become empty in certain areas	Solutions identified to target the trend of properties becoming vacant	March-20	Housing Strategy	It has generally been accepted through empirical work that the reason for this is natural “churn” within the housing market. This is why we have prioritised the long term empty

					properties and concentrated on a proactive approach in tackling these.
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<b>Strategic Objective 5</b>		<b>To identify possible solutions that could prevent properties from becoming empty and also develop interventions for different market areas and types</b>			
<b>Actions that will deliver this objective</b>	<b>Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action</b>	<b>Measures of Success</b>	<b>Delivery Date</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Explore opportunities for Area Based Regeneration	Identify next area to deliver the Health and Housing Action Area scheme	Area identified	March-20	Housing Strategy	Similar project currently being carried out in Penrhiwceiber under the Tackling Poverty agenda

# Fforwm Landlordiaid RCT

# Cylchlythyr

**Rhifyn yr Haf**

**Y mater hwn:**

- **Asiantaeth Gosod Tai Cymdeithasol**
  - **Cyngor ar Bopeth—Cyrсияu Hyfforddi RhCT**
  - **Dwr Cymru—Tariffau a Chynlluniau**
  - **Arbed— Rhaglen Cartrefi Cynnes Penrhiwceiber**
  - **Troi Tai'n Gartrefi**
- Cynllun Benthyciadau**
- **Diogelwch Eiddo — (Heddlu De Cymru)**





### **This Issue:**

- **RCTCBC Social Letting Agency**
- **Citizens Advice RCT Training Courses**
- **Dwr Cymru—Tariffs and Schemes**
- **Arbed—Warm Homes Scheme in Penrhiwceiber**
- **Houses into Homes Loan Scheme**
- **Property Security— (South Wales Police)**



ASiantaeth Gosod Tai Cymdeithasol  
**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**  
SOCIAL LETTING AGENCY

**Diweriddariad asiantaeth  
gosod cymdeithasol:**

Y diweddaraaf am yr Asiantaeth Gosod Tai Cymdeithasol – mae 108 o landlordiaid wedi cysylltu â ni i fynegi diddordeb yn y cynllun hyd yma. Cawson ni gyfnod o amser heb gyllid ar gyfer y Grantiau ond rydyn ni'n falch o gadarnhau ein bod bellach wedi derbyn cyllid ar ei gyfer eto, ac mae hyn wedi cynyddu diddordeb y Landlordiaid unwaith eto.

Rydyn ni wedi derbyn 3 chais am grant, ac mae un o'r rhain gyda'n carfan Gyfreithiol yn aros i gael ei gofrestru ar y cynllun. Mae gyda ni nifer o landlordiaid sy'n aros i'r gofrestrfa tir gael ei chwblhau a byddan nhw'n cofrestru ar y cynllun.



ASiantaeth Gosod Tai Cymdeithasol  
**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**  
SOCIAL LETTING AGENCY

**Mae'r Cyngor yn gweithio gyda Llywodraeth Cymru, landlordiaid ac asiantaethau gosod i sefydlu Asiantaeth Gosod Tai Cymdeithasol, i gynyddu opsiynau o ran tai a helpu pobl i ddod o hyd i lety hir dymor, fforddiadwy, o ansawdd da i'w rentu yn y sector preifat.**

Bydd y cynllun yn anelu at weithio gyda'r rheiny sydd mewn perygl o fod yn ddigartref a bydd yn cynorthwyo pobl i ddod o hyd i lety i'w rentu yn y sector preifat, ac i gynnal y llety hwnnw.

- Gwarant rhent am 5 mlynedd.
- Prydles eiddo 5 mlynedd.
- Rheoli Tenantiaeth.
- Bydd yr Asiantaeth Gosod Tai Cymdeithasol yn gyfrifol am atgyweiriadau a gwaith cynnal a chadw cyffredinol heb unrhyw gost ychwanegol i'r landlord.
- Cymorth Materion Tai.
- Bydd Grant Adnewyddu o £2,000 a benthychiad di-log o £8,000 ar gael o bosibl mewn rhai amgylchiadau.
- Mae rhent wed'i osod ar y gyfradd y Lwfans Tai Lleol, gyda ffi reoli o 10% yn cael ei didynnu'n uniongyrchol gan y Cyngor.



Am ragor o wybodaeth  
E-bost: [GosodTaiCymdeithasol@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:GosodTaiCymdeithasol@rctcbc.gov.uk)  
Ffôn: 01443 281490



RHONDDA CYNON TAF





ASIANTAETH GOSOD TAI CYMDEITHASOL  
**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**  
SOCIAL LETTING AGENCY

### Social Letting agency update

We have been contacted by 108 landlords who have expressed an interest in the scheme to date. We had a period of time without funding for the Grants however we are pleased to confirm that we have now received funding again for this which has increased Landlords interests once more.

We have received 3 grant applications, one of which is with our Legal team awaiting to be signed onto the scheme. We have several landlords awaiting Land registry to be completed and will be signing onto the scheme.



ASIANTAETH GOSOD TAI CYMDEITHASOL  
**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**  
SOCIAL LETTING AGENCY

**The Council are working with Welsh Government, landlords and letting agents to set up a Social Letting Agency (SLA) to increase housing options and help provide access to long term, affordable, good quality rented accommodation in the private rented sector.**

The scheme will aim to work with those who are at risk of homelessness and provide support to help people access and maintain private rented sector tenancies.

- Rent guarantee for 5 years.
- 5 year property lease.
- Tenancy Management.
- General repairs and maintenance covered by the Social Letting Agency with no extra cost to the landlord.
- Housing Related Support.
- £2k Renovation Grant and £8k interest free loan may be available in some circumstances.
- Rent is set at the LHA rate, with a 10% management fee deducted directly by the Council.



For further information  
Email: [SocialHousingLettingAgency@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:SocialHousingLettingAgency@rctcbc.gov.uk)  
Call: 01443 281490



# Cyngor ar Bopeth

*'Eich Hawliau, Eich Ty, Eich Cartref'*

Bydd llawer ohonoch wedi mynychu'r sesiynau hyfforddi ar-lein 'Eich Hawliau, Eich Tŷ, Eich Cartref' sydd wedi bod yn rhedeg trwy RCT Cyngor ar Bopeth, hoffai RCT Cyngor ar Bopeth ddiolch i bawb a fynychodd y cyrsiau.

Hoffem ni yn RCT Cyngor ar Bopeth ddiolch i chi am eich cefnogaeth a chyfranogiad yn ein prosiect YRYHYH. Mae ein cyllid i ddarparu sesiynau hyfforddi bellach wedi dod i ben ond rydym yn dal i allu darparu cyngor i landlordiaid / tenantiaid trwy ein proses atgyfeirio neu gyfeirio at ein swyddfa trwy 01443 409284.

'Mae'r adborth wedi bod yn wych gyda landlordiaid yn cymryd llawer i ffwrdd o'r sesiynau ac yn gweithredu ar ein cyngor sy'n wych a dyna beth roeddem yn ceisio ei gyflawni'

Bethan Huish



# Citizens Advice Bureau

*'Your Rights, Your House, Your Home'*

Many of you will have attended the 'Your Rights, Your House, Your Home' online training sessions which have been running through Citizens Advice RCT, Citizens Advice RCT would like to thank everybody who attended the courses.

We at Citizens Advice RCT would like to thank you for your continued support and participation in our YRYHYH project. Our funding to deliver training sessions has now ended but we are still able to provide advice to landlords / tenants via our referral process or signposting into our office via 01443 409284.

'The feedback has been brilliant with landlords taking a lot away from the sessions and acting on our advice which is brilliant and is what we aimed to achieve'

Bethan Huish, Your Rights, Your House, Your Home Project Worker





# Dwr Cymru *Tariffau a Chynlluniau*

Mae gan Dŵr Cymru ystod o dariffau cymdeithasol, cynlluniau dyled a Gwasanaethau Chofrestr Blaenoriaeth i gefnogi'ch tenantiaid a allai fod ar Incwm isel, bod â chyflwr meddygol neu deulu mawr. Pasiwch hwn os gwelwch yn dda gwybodaeth fel y gallant elwa o'r cynlluniau hyn.



## HELPU'R RHAI SYDD EI ANGEN FWYAF

Os ydych chi'n cael problemau o ran talu eich bil, peidiwch â'u hanwybyddu, mae gennym ni nifer o ffyrdd y gallem ni eu defnyddio i'ch helpu.



### RHANNU COST EICH BIL YN RHANDALIADAU DRWY SEFYDLU CYNLLUN TALU

- Gallwch sefydlu **Debyd Uniongyrchol** gan ddefnyddio ein ffurflen Debyd Uniongyrchol ar-lein (rhandaliadau blynyddol, bob hanner blwyddyn, misol neu wythnosol ar gael).
- Os byddai'n well gennych dalu drwy gerdyn talu gallwch drefnu hyn drwy ddefnyddio ffurflen cerdyn talu ar-lein.

Os ydych chi'n talu mewn rhandaliadau yn barod ac yn dal i gael trafferthion, peidiwch ag anwybyddu unrhyw broblemau. Edrychwch ar y cynlluniau eraill isod.



### FFYRDD I WNEUD EICH BIL DŴR YN FWY FFORDDIADWY

- Mae ein tariff **HelpU** yn gosod costau ar gyfradd fforddiadwy ar gyfer aelwydydd incwm isel sy'n derbyn budd-daliadau prawf modd.
- Mae ein cynllun **WaterSure** Cymru yn capio eich bil ar uchafswm o £343 a allai leihau eich bil.
- Talu eich costau dŵr yn awtomatig drwy eich budd-daliadau gyda'n cynllun **Dŵr Uniongyrchol** ac fe wnawn ni leihau eich bil £25!
- Mae'r **Gronfa Cymorth i Gwsmeriaid** yn rhoi rhandaliadau fforddiadwyi chi ac yn clirio eich dyled.



### GWASANAETHAU Â BLAENORIAETH

Rydym am sicrhau ein bod yn rhoi'r gwasanaeth gorau posibl i bob un o'n cwsmeriaid, bob amser. Os oes gennych ofynion penodol oherwydd eich oedran, iechyd, cyflwr meddygol neu ofynion cyfathrebu ychwanegol, cofrestrwch gyda ni fel y gallwn helpu i addasu ein gwasanaethau i ddiwallu eich anghenion. Rydym yn deall nad yw sefyllfa nac anghenion pawb yr un fath, ac felly gall ein Gwasanaethau â Blaenoriaeth eich helpu.

I gysylltu â ni

 Ewch i'n gwefan  
[www.dwrcymru.com](http://www.dwrcymru.com)

 neu ffonio  
0800 052 6058



# Dwr Cymru *Tariffs and Schemes*

Welsh Water have a range of social tariffs, debt schemes and Priority Services Register to support your tenants who may be on a low income, have a medical condition or large family. Please pass this information on so that they can benefit from these schemes.



## HELPING THOSE WHO NEED IT THE MOST

If you're having problems paying your bill, please don't ignore them. We have a number of ways we may be able to help you.



### SPREAD THE COST OF YOUR BILL BY CHOOSING A PAYMENT OPTION

- Set up a **Direct Debit** using our online Direct Debit form (annual, half-year, monthly or weekly instalments available).
- If you would prefer to pay via a payment card you can set this up using our online payment card form.

If you are already paying via instalments and you're still struggling, please don't ignore any problems. Instead take a look at other schemes below.



### WAYS TO MAKE YOUR WATER BILL MORE AFFORDABLE

- Our **HelpU** tariff fixes charges at an affordable rate for low income households in receipt of means-tested benefits.
- Our Metered **WaterSure** Wales tariff fixes charges at an affordable rate for low income households who have a medical condition or a large family.
- Pay your water charges automatically through your benefits with our **Water Direct** scheme and we'll reduce your bill by £25!
- The **Customer Assistance Fund** gives you affordable instalments and helps you clear what you owe.



### PRIORITY SERVICES

At times, some customers need a little extra help. For example, you may be a parent with a young baby, a dialysis patient, have sight or hearing difficulties or are elderly or disabled. By joining our **Priority Services Register** you can get extra help with:

- bottled water if your supply is interrupted
- alternative ways of getting information
- reassurance against bogus callers

### To contact us:

- Visit our website [www.dwrcymru.com](http://www.dwrcymru.com)
- or telephone 0800 052 0145



# Llywodraeth Cymru

## Rhaglen Cartrefi Cynnes

Yn dilyn y lefelau uchel o dlodi plant (41%) a gyhoeddwyd ym Mhenrhawceiber, roedd y Cyngor yn edrych i mewn i opsiynau a fyddai'n helpu i liniaru effeithiau tlodi ar breswylwyr. Un o'r dulliau yma yw cyflawni Strategaeth Tlodi Tanwydd y Cyngor: Cartrefi Cynnes. Yn rhan o hyn mae'r Cyngor wedi bod yn targedu gwasanaethau Gwresogi ac Arbed yn rhagweithiol i'r gymuned. Arweiniodd hyn at nodi cynllun effeithlonrwydd ynni wedi'i ariannu gan Lywodraeth Cymru ar gyfer yr ardal gan Arbed am Byth, sydd ar gael ar gyfer cartrefi rhentu preifat a pherchen-feddianwyr.

Oherwydd maint yr ardal, cafodd cyfnod llai ei nodi lle mae crynodiadau uchel o gartrefi ag ynni aneffeithlon, gan ddefnyddio data sydd wedi'i gyflwyno ar Dystysgrifau Perfformiad Ynni. Cafodd ffenestr mynegiant o ddiddordeb ei hagar ym mis Medi 2020 ar gyfer perchen-feddianwyr a chartrefi rhentu preifat (nid tai cymdeithasol) yn yr ardal ffin yma. Ar ddiwedd y flwyddyn ariannol mae cyfanswm o 206 o fesurau wedi'u gosod mewn 56 o gartrefi. Y prif fesurau sy'n cael eu gosod yw paneli solar ffotofoltaig ac uwchraddio systemau gwresogi, gan ddod â buddsoddiad allanol i'r ardal. Ar ddiwedd y flwyddyn ariannol mae 23 eiddo yn weddill i'w gosod sydd wedi cwblhau arolygon. Mae hefyd capasiti ychwanegol i gynnwys 80 eiddo ychwanegol dros yr ychydig fisoedd nesaf, os oes sgôr categori E neu'n is gan gartrefi.

Mae'r Cyngor yn gweithio gyda'r garfan Arbed am Byth i gynorthwyo cynifer o breswylwyr â phosibl i gael mynediad i'r cynllun, ac yn darparu cyngor diduedd am ddim ar grantiau eraill sydd ar gael a sut i helpu preswylwyr i arbed arian ar filiau ynni er mwyn lleihau'r risg o dlodi tanwydd yn yr ardal.

Os oes unrhyw gartrefi gyda chi yn yr ardal a fyddai'n elwa ar osod mesurau ynni, neu i gael cyngor am ddim i denantiaid ar sut i arbed arian ar filiau ynni, yna siaradwch â'n carfan Gwresogi ac Arbed drwy ffonio 01443 281136 neu e-bostio [GwresogiacArbed@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:GwresogiacArbed@rctcbc.gov.uk)

Rydyn ni hefyd yn cynnig cymhorthfa ynni digidol wythnosol ar-lein rhwng 1pm a 3pm ar ddydd Iau, lle mae Swyddogion Ynni ar gael i breswylwyr neu landlordiaid 'alw heibio' a siarad â ni. I ddefnyddio'r gwasanaeth yma, defnyddiwch y ddolen neu'r cod QR isod.

<https://attenduk.vc/citizens-advice-cgb-rct-reception>





# Welsh Government's Warm Homes Programme

Following the published high levels of child poverty (41%) in Penrhiwceiber, the Council was looking into options that would help to mitigate the impacts of poverty for residents. One of these approaches is the delivery of the Council's Fuel Poverty Strategy: Warmer Homes. As part of this the Council has been proactively targeting Heat & Save services to the community. This led to the identification of a Welsh Government funded energy efficiency scheme for the area by Arbed am Byth, which is available for private rented homes and owner occupiers.

Due to the size of the area a smaller phase was identified where there are high concentrations of energy inefficient homes, using lodged EPC data. An expression of interest window was opened in Sept 2020 for owner occupiers and private rented homes (not social housing) in this boundary area. As at end of the financial year a total of 206 measures have been installed to 56 homes with the main measures being installed are solar PV and heating upgrades bring external investment into the area. As at the end of the financial year there are 23 properties left to install that have completed surveys and also additional capacity for an additional 80 properties to be included over the next few months, if homes are E rated or below.

The Council is working with the Arbed am Byth team to help as many residents as possible access the scheme as well as providing free, impartial advice on other grants available and how to help residents save money on energy bills to reduce the risk of fuel poverty in the area.

If you have any homes in the area that would benefit from energy measures being installed or for tenants to be given free advice on how to save money on energy bills then please speak to our Heat & Save team on telephone 01443 281136 or email [heatandsave@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:heatandsave@rctcbc.gov.uk)

We also offer a weekly online digital energy surgery between 1pm and 3pm on Thursdays where Energy Officers are available for residents or landlords to 'drop in' and speak to us. To access this service please use link or QR code below.

<https://attenduk.vc/citizens-advice-cgb-rct-reception>





# Troi Tai'n Gartrefi Cynllun Benthyciadau

Ydych chi'n berchen ar gartref sydd wedi bod yn wag am chwe mis neu hirach? Os ydych chi, efallai eich bod chi'n gymwys i gael cyfran o'r £10 miliwn sydd ar gael drwy Gynllun Benthyciadau Troi Tai'n Gartrefi Llywodraeth Cymru. Ers dechrau'r cynllun yn 2012, mae dros 130 o dai yn Rhondda Cynon Taf wedi cael eu hadfywio a'u defnyddio eto.

## Rhai Pethau i'w Cofio

- \* Rhaid bod yr eiddo wedi bod yn wag am chwe mis neu hirach
- \* Mae modd i chi fenthyg hyd at £25,000 ar gyfer pob eiddo neu Uned, hyd at uchafswm o £150,000 fesul ymgeisydd
- \* Does dim hawl i fenthyciadau fod yn fwy na 80% o werth presenol yr eiddo ar y farchnad
- \* Rhaid talu'r swm wedi'i fenthyg yn ôl o fewn 2 flynedd os yw'r eiddo yn cael ei werthu, a thair blynedd os yw'r eiddo yn cael ei osod
- \* Rhaid marchnata eiddo i'w werthu/ei osod o fewn 12 wythnos i gwblhau'r gwaith



Cyn



Ar ôl



Cyn



Ar ôl

## OES DIDDORDEB GYDA CHI?

Cysylltwch â Charfan Grantiau a Strategaeth Dai RhCT

Enw: Peter Lewis - Swyddog Strategaeth Dai

Rhif ffôn: 01443 281136



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government



# Houses into Homes Loans

Do you own a home which has been empty for six months or longer? If you do, you could qualify for a share of the £10 million available in the Welsh Government's Houses into Homes Loan Scheme. Since the start of the scheme in 2012, over 130 properties within Rhondda Cynon Taf have been brought back into use.

## What You Need To Know

- \* Property must be empty for six months or longer
- \* You can borrow up to £25,000 for each property or Unit up to a maximum of £250,000 per applicant
- \* Loans cannot exceed 80% of the current market value
- \* The amount borrowed must be paid back within 2 years if the property is sold and 3 years if the property is let
- \* Properties must be marketed for sale/let within 12 weeks of completion
- \* Works must be completed within a twelve-month period and comply with the Houses in Homes Standard



Before



Before



After



After

## INTERESTED?

Please Contact:

Peter Lewis – Housing Strategy Officer

RCT Housing Grants & Strategy Team

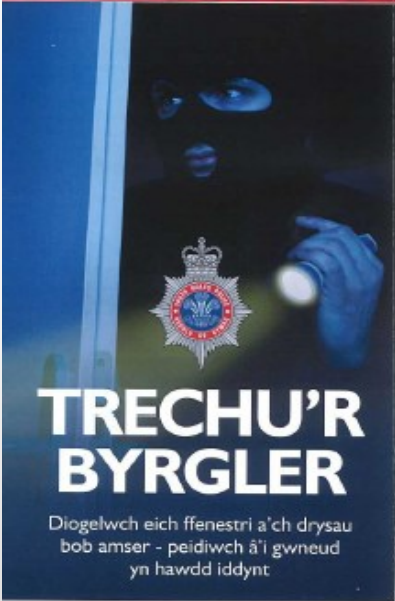
01443 281136






# Diogelwch Eiddo Heddlu De Cymru

HEDDLU DE CYMRU
TRECHU'R BYRGLER!




TRECHU'R  
BYRGLER

Diogelwch eich ffenestri a'ch drysau  
bob amser - peidiwch â'i gwneud  
yn hawdd iddynt



0800 555 111




/swpolice

**A YDYCH WEDI GWELD NEU WEDI  
CLYWED UNRHYW BETH AMHEUS?  
GALLAI EICH GWYBODAETH FOD YN  
BWYSIG DROS BEN!**

GALLA'R WYBODAETH HON HELPU I'CH  
ATAL RHAG DIODDEF BYRGLERIAETH.






**DIOGELWCH FFENESTRI**  
Dylai pob ffenest llawr gwaetod a phob un  
hygech ar y llawr cyntaf fod â chloean a  
weithredir gan allwedd. Defnyddir ffenestri  
cafn yn aml fel dull mwydriad gan  
droseddwr. Prymchw gloean sy'n dal y fframiau gyda'i  
gilydd yn hytrach nag i'r handleni.  
Mae ffitio swits amseru ar lampau o amgylch y tŷ i oleuo  
ar wahanol adegau gyda'r hwyr yn rhoi'r argraff bod  
rhywun adref.

**GOLAU ALLANOL**  
Mae golau allanol da yn gallu cadw lleidr  
draw neu dynnu sylw at leidr.  
Y dull goleuo mwyaf priodol i'w ddefnyddio  
yw goleuo llymdd eiddon ynri isaf, a naelir gan swits  
cyffwrdd i'w wael fel ei bod yn golauo dim ond pan fydd yn  
dwyll. Mae hyn yn rhoi lefel golau cyson a lllebyg. Ychydig  
mâ'n ei gosio i'w reddeg ac mae'n cynorthwyo i greu  
amgylchedd sy'n rhoi mwy o ddiogelwch meddwl.

Mewn argyfwng ffoniwch 999  
Fel arall, ffoniwch 101  
[www.heddlu-de-cymru.police.uk](http://www.heddlu-de-cymru.police.uk)  
 /swpolice

**SIED GARDD**  
Ni chafodd sied gardd arferol ei bwrddu i  
storio eitemau gwerthfawr megis beiciau ac  
eitemau trydanol. Dylai drysau sied giel o  
leiaf ddau glo o ansawdd da wedi ei sicrhau gan fylt trwm a  
chloean bachau caeedig. Mae angen i'r ffenestri fod â  
griliau neu wedi eu cau â choed. Gall eitemau mawr gael  
eu dynnu â'i gilydd gyda chadwynau a'u cloi i ffitiau ar  
lawr y sied. Gellir prynu larymau sy'n gweithio â batrï yn  
rhan fwyaf o archfarchnadoedd DIY.

**YN AML DEFNYDDIR OFFER A ADEWIR  
MEWN SIEDIAU A GERDDI I DORRI MEWN I  
GARTREFI.**

**DIOGELWCH Y DRWS BLAEN**

- Mae gan ddrysau uPVC sarni gwrthanol ddull o glai
- Gwirfwrth fod eich drysau yn bodloni gofynion eich  
polisi yswiriant. Mae'r mwyafirif o gwmnïau yswiriant  
yn mynnu cael tri phwynt sy'n cloi

**P'UN AI MAI DRWS PREN NEU UPVC SYDD  
GENNYCH, DEFNYDDIWCH GADWYN AR Y  
DRWS A FFENESTRI BACH BOB AMSER.**

Am ragor o wybodaeth am ddiogelwch  
cartref ewch i:  
[www.securebydesign.com](http://www.securebydesign.com)  
Er mwyn cofrestru eich eiddo AM DDM  
ewch i: [www.immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com)

CADW DE CYMRU'N DDIOGEL

Hoffai Heddlu De Cymru rannu'r wybodaeth uchod y maent yn teimlo sy'n ddefnyddiol wrth amddiffyn eich eiddo yn y frwydr yn erbyn byrgleriaeth. Ac yn helpu i'w cadw'n ddiogel. Byddant hefyd yn mynychu ein fforwm landlordiaid i drafod y cynnydd mewn Ffatrioedd Cannabis sy'n ymddangos mewn eiddo o amgylch Rhondda Cynon Taf a byddant yn trafod materion diogelwch yn fwy manwl

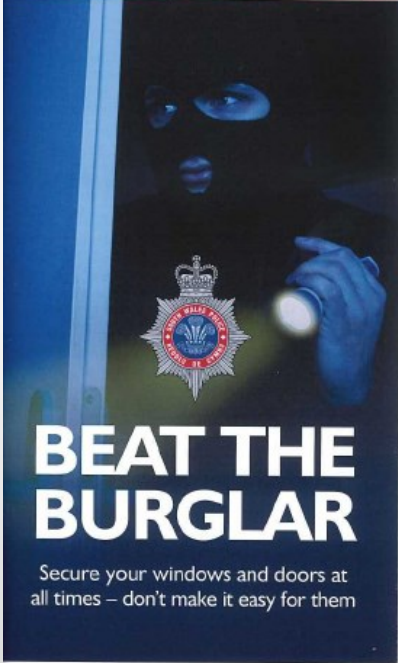
Os hoffech gael unrhyw wybodaeth bellach yn y cyfamser, gallwch gysylltu â Partneriaeth Diogelwch Cymunedol ar: ☎️: **01443 657247**

 @SWPolice  @SWPolice  /SWPTV  /SWPolice

# Property Security

# South Wales Police

SOUTH WALES POLICE
BEAT THE BURGLAR!



## BEAT THE BURGLAR

Secure your windows and doors at all times – don't make it easy for them

**HAVE YOU SEEN OR HEARD ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS? YOUR INFORMATION COULD BE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT!**

**THIS INFORMATION COULD HELP PREVENT YOU BECOMING A VICTIM.**

**WINDOW SECURITY**

All ground floor and accessible first floor windows should have key operated locks fitted. Rear windows are often used as a means of entry by the criminal. Purchase locks that secure the frames together rather than to handles.

Fitting timer switches to lamps around the house to activate at different times during the evening gives the impression someone is at home.

**OUTDOOR LIGHTING**

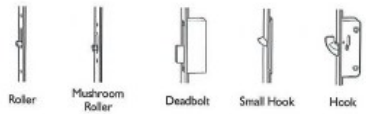
Good outdoor lighting can put off or draw attention to a burglar.

The most appropriate form of lighting to use is high-efficiency low-energy lighting, controlled by a dusk-to-dawn switch so that it comes on only when it's dark. This provides a constant and uniform level of light. It costs very little to run and helps to create a more reassuring environment.

**GARDEN SHED**

The standard garden shed was never designed to store valuable items such as pedal cycles and electrical items. Shed doors should have a minimal of two quality hasps fitted, secured with coach bolts and closed shackled padlocks. Windows need to be grilled or boarded. Large items can be chained together and secured to fitting on the sheds floor. Battery operated alarms can be purchased from most DIY stores.

**TOOLS LEFT IN SHEDS AND GARDENS ARE OFTEN USED TO MAKE A FORCED ENTRY INTO HOMES.**



**FRONT DOOR SECURITY**

- uPVC doors have a number of different locking methods.
- Please check that your doors meet the requirements of your insurance policy. Most insurance companies insist on three locking points

**WHETHER YOU HAVE A WOODEN OR UPVC DOOR, USE DOOR CHAINS AND VIEWERS AT ALL TIMES**

In an emergency always dial **999**  
 For non-emergencies dial **101**  
[www.south-wales.police.uk](http://www.south-wales.police.uk)  
 /swpolice

Further information on home security please visit:  
[www.securebydesign.com](http://www.securebydesign.com)  
 To register your property **FREE** visit:  
[www.immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com)

KEEPING SOUTH WALES SAFE

South Wales Police would like to share the above information which they feel is useful in protecting your properties in the fight against burglary. And helping to keep them secure. They will also be attending our landlord forum to discuss the rise in Cannabis Factories which are popping up in properties around Rhondda Cynon Taf and will discuss issues of security in more detail

If you would like any further information in the mean time, you can contact the Community Safety Partnership on:

☎: 01443 657247

 @SWPolice 
  @SWPolice 
  /SWPTV 
  /SWPolice



## APPENDIX D: Empty Homes Case Studies

<p><b>Background:</b></p>
<p>The Houses into Homes Loans are provided to assist landlords of empty properties to bring them back into use and complete the refurbishment of the properties to a high standard. <b>To date, 126 loans have been approved which has provided 175 new units of high quality accommodation within the Borough.</b> The loans are offered on an interest free basis; two years' interest free if the property is to be sold and three years if the property is for rent. <b>The scheme has contributed just over £3.7 million to the local economy with local building contractors undertaking much of the work and materials being sourced locally.</b></p>
<p><b>Support:</b></p>
<p>The applicant received a £50,000 loan to convert a derelict commercial property on Treorchy High Street into two x 2 bed flats and a commercial ground floor shop for rent. The applicants originally applied for a loan to help refurbish the one flat but after a site visit were advised to apply for planning for additional flat and reapply for a further loan. The maximum loan of £25,000 was then approved for both flats and the applicants are also sourcing further assistance via Regeneration Team and possible Town Centre funding initiatives.</p>
<p><b>Impact:</b></p>
<p>The property had been targeted by the Empty Homes Operational Group due to the fact it has been vacant for 17 years (since 2004). Officers of the Council assisted the home owner with initiating the sale of the property to the buyer via our proactive approach to empty home reduction within the Borough.</p> <p>The work to be completed on the property will result in a total renovation and will include; new UPVC windows and doors, new kitchens, new bathrooms, new roof, damp proofing, central heating systems, tiling, plastering, rendering and a new rear extension. This will be supplemented by a new shop façade which will afford a visual impact on the already popular high street. The impact of the targeted approach developed by the Empty Homes Operational Group is that a long term empty property, which is located in a high demand area of the Borough has been brought back into use and two additional units of accommodation has also been made available.</p>

Before



After



## **Case Study – Valleys Taskforce Empty Homes Grant scheme**

**Local Authority:** Rhondda Cynon Taf

**Empty property since:** 09/03/2018

**Applicant/s:** First Time Buyer

**Property Type:** 4 bedroom Terraced House

**Grant Approved:** October 2019    **Grant completion date:** 29/11/2019

**Total cost of work:** £23,363.33, **Grant Allocation:** £20,378.61    **Client's contribution:** £3,363.33

Work carried out:

- Electrical re-wiring to the 4 bedrooms
- New kitchen facilities
- New bathroom facilities
- Dampproofing
- Tanking
- New flooring
- Insulated dry lining
- New doors
- Rendering
- Structural support (steel beams/support pilers)
- New inlet Gully
- New Ceilings
- New doors
- Roof insulation
- New partial central heating
- New bathroom facilities
- Chimney stack removal

Please see below photographs of the property before and after receiving the VTF Empty Homes Grant.







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## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CABINET

18 OCTOBER 2021

### THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021/22

#### REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, CLLR A. MORGAN

Author: Lesley Lawson – Performance Manager

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This report outlines Rhondda Cynon Taf's draft Corporate Performance Report (CPR) which contains progress for 2020/21 and plans for 2021/22 in respect of the Council's strategic priorities. It also sets out how the CPR enables the Council to meet its statutory reporting requirements.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Endorse the draft CPR (Appendix 1) and recommend its approval by Council on 20 October 2021.

#### **3. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 To ensure the Council publishes information on performance across its strategic priorities in line with statutory reporting requirements.

#### **4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 4.1 The Council's key strategic priorities for the period 2020-2024 were agreed by Council [on 4 March 2020](#) and are set out in its Corporate Plan '[Making a Difference](#)'. 'Making a Difference' continues the positive work started in 2016 as part of the previous Corporate Plan, 'The Way Ahead', and is a key element of the Council's strategic and financial management arrangements to ensure it:

- is well placed to meet future ambitions, particularly in the context of challenging funding levels, changes in the demand for services (including the on-going impact of the Covid-19 pandemic) and legislation changes;
- sets a clear strategy and set of priorities for future years;
- allocates resources to priority areas; and
- puts in place plans to deliver the agreed priorities.

- 4.2 The Corporate Plan sets a clear direction for the Council, which all staff and Managers can see, understand and work toward through their Service Delivery Plans. There are transparent, robust and regular reporting and scrutiny arrangements in place which also ensure that residents and external stakeholders are able to hold the Council to account.
- 4.3 The three strategic priorities are:
1. Ensuring **People**: are independent, healthy and successful;
  2. Creating **Places**: where people are proud to live, work and play; and
  3. Enabling **Prosperity**: creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.
- 4.4 Progress in the delivery of these priorities has been reported as part of the Council's quarterly Performance Reports to Cabinet and the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee during 2020/21, and have also been made available on the [Council's website](#).
- 4.5 There are currently two separate, but related, legislative reporting requirements on the Council that are met by the CPR:
- [The Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), which requires public bodies to set and publish well-being objectives, take all reasonable steps to meet those objectives and publish an annual report of progress; and
  - [The Local Government \(Wales\) Measure 2009](#), which requires all local authorities in Wales to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions by setting Improvement Objectives and to make a public assessment of their performance for each financial year by no later than 31 October following the end of the financial year to which the information relates.
- 4.6 Improvement Objectives need to reflect the strategic priorities of the Council and to all intents and purposes, Well-being Objectives and Improvement Objectives can be treated as one and the same. Therefore, by integrating processes for setting and reporting on its Corporate Priorities, the Council can discharge its duties under both areas of legislation.
- 4.7 This approach was supported by Council endorsing the Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference' on [4 March 2020](#) when it agreed that the Council's Corporate Priorities would also serve as the Council's Well-being Objectives.
- 4.8 Following on, 2020/21 is the last reporting year to which the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 will apply to Local Authorities. From April 2021, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 puts in place a new system for performance and governance based on Self-Assessment and Peer review, including the consolidation of the Welsh Ministers' support and intervention powers. As Members will be aware, the requirements of the Local Government and Election (Wales) Act 2021 were set out in a report to [Cabinet 25 March](#) 2021.



## **5. THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLANNING ARRANGEMENTS 2021/22**

- 5.1 The Council has a consistent track record of setting and delivering its Vision to meet statutory reporting duties, with corporate planning arrangements for 2021/22 providing the necessary framework for services as they continue to both recover from the Covid-19 pandemic and focus on supporting the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities.
- 5.2 The Council's draft CPR for 2021/22 has been prepared against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and is included as **Appendix 1**. The content has been reviewed and challenged by Council officers and its purpose is to set out the:
- progress of the Council's priorities, **People, Places and Prosperity** during 2020/21 with more detailed evaluations of performance and progress, and other relevant support documents, included as electronic links; and
  - plans to deliver the priorities of **People, Places and Prosperity** in 2021/22, with electronic links included to the detailed action plan for each priority.
- 5.3 In this way, the draft CPR aims to provide elected Members, partners, residents, staff and regulators with an overview of progress and plans, as well as access to further detailed information. This approach also ensures the Council meets its legal duties as set out in paragraph 4.5.
- 5.4 On the 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021, Cabinet considered the Council's Quarter 1 Performance Report that included progress updates on the 2021/22 draft plans for People, Places and Prosperity, noting that these were subject to approval by full Council in October 2021. Where revisions are required to the content of the plans as part of the approval process, these will be incorporated into quarterly Performance Reports presented during the year.
- 5.5 For Members information, Audit Wales has a statutory duty to audit the extent to which Councils have met their statutory responsibilities and this will be formally reported to Council in due course.

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

- 6.1 There are no equality and diversity or socio-economic duty implications to report.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 There are no consultation requirements emanating from the recommendation set out in the report.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

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

**9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

9.1 The report aims to ensure the Council complies with its legal duties under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

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

10.1 This report evidences how the Council is managing its Strategic Priorities, as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan, '[Making a Difference](#)'. The CPR also provides information and evidence of how the Council is meeting its duty to comply with the Sustainable Development Principle, as contained within the Well-being of Future Generations Act, as well as contributing to the seven national goals.

**11. CONCLUSION**

11.1 The Council's CPR 2021/22 demonstrates the positive progress made over the last year in the context of the global, national and regional challenges in 2020/21, and puts in place ambitious and clear plans for the Council for 2021/22.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972**

**as amended by**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021/22**

**18 October 2021**

**Report of the Chief Executive in discussions with the Leader of the Council, Cllr A. Morgan**

**Background Papers**

Cabinet - [Council Performance Reports \(quarterly and year-end\)](#)

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**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

# **The Council's draft Corporate Performance Report**

**2021-22**

**VERSION 8/10/21**

## **All data included in this report will be subject to final checks**

*This document contains the Council's priorities which are the Improvement Objectives as required by the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and also the Council's Well-being objectives as required by the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015. To all intents and purposes, Well-being objectives and Improvement Objectives can be treated as one and the same. Therefore, by integrating processes for setting and reporting on these key objectives, the Council has discharged its duties under both areas of legislation.*

***This document is available in other languages and formats on request.***

## Contents

No	Sections	Page
1.	Contents	2
2.	Contacts	3
3.	Leader's message	4
4.	Continuing to deliver	7
5.	How we are performing	9
6.	Delivering our Priorities in 2020/21	12
7.	• People	17
8.	• Places	27
9.	• Prosperity	36
10.	Budget	46
11.	A Fair and Equal County Borough	48
12.	Welsh Language - delivering services in the language of your choice	56
13.	Climate Change	62
14.	Bio diversity	68
15.	Involving people and communities	71
16.	Listening & Learning from your feedback	74
17.	Giving Back	76
18.	Working now for the Well-being of Future Generations	78
19.	Well-being of Future Generations Act Goals Matrix	85

## Making a Difference

This is the Council's annual Corporate Performance Report. It tells you about how we performed in 2020/21 and our new priorities for 2021/22.

We welcome your views on this report, our plans for the future and how we did last year. We would also like to know how you, your family and your community have been affected by our work to improve services.

### You can get in touch

Via the web	<a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/sayit">www.rctcbc.gov.uk/sayit</a> <a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/Reportit">www.rctcbc.gov.uk/Reportit</a>
Via Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/rctcouncil">@rctcouncil</a> or <a href="https://twitter.com/Lets_Talk_Rct">@Lets_Talk_Rct</a>
Via Facebook	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/RCTCouncil">www.facebook.com/RCTCouncil</a>
Via the Leader's Blog	<a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/TheLeadersBlog">www.rctcbc.gov.uk/TheLeadersBlog</a>
Help us to improve by providing your comments, compliments and complaints	<a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/feedback">www.rctcbc.gov.uk/feedback</a>
Join the Citizens' Panel	<a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/jointhepanel">www.rctcbc.gov.uk/jointhepanel</a>
Get involved in our Conversations	<a href="https://lets-talk.rctcbc.gov.uk/">https://lets-talk.rctcbc.gov.uk/</a>
Consultation Team	<a href="mailto:consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk">consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk</a>
Cwm Taf Engagement Hub	<a href="http://www.ourcwmtaf.wales">www.ourcwmtaf.wales</a>
Your Councillor	Find the contact details of your local Councillor <a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councillors">www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councillors</a>
If you are interested in taking over the running of a Council run building or service	<a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/rcttogether">www.rctcbc.gov.uk/rcttogether</a>

## **A message from the Leader of the Council – Councillor Andrew Morgan**

Welcome to the Council's Annual Corporate Performance Report for 2021.

The report helps us to meet many of the Council's legal reporting requirements, but mostly provides the reader with an open account of how we are performing and delivering for the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf. As we have done in our previous annual reports, we have brought together information from across the Council's services reflecting on how well we delivered our priorities, where we can do better and our plans to deliver our ambitions in the coming year and the challenges we face.

This year, the report reflects our work during the most challenging of all times. The Covid-19 coronavirus that started its deadly journey across the world in early 2020, kept up its relentless march throughout 2020/21 and touched every one of us in some way.

On 23 March 2021, we joined the national [Day of Reflection](#) marking the anniversary of the first [National Lockdown](#). Here in the Council, we joined the silence and lit up our landmark buildings, marking and remembering those people who lost their lives through the virus, paying tribute to those who cared for and kept us safe and sharing the hope for a brighter future. There have been many other lives lost to the virus since that day, and behind each life lost there is a family, friends, colleagues and communities who grieve and whose lives were changed. There are also many others in our community whose health continues to be affected by the virus. Our thoughts are with them, and also how we can help people, communities and the local economy to recover from the pandemic is at the forefront our minds.

Like all public, private, and voluntary organisations, the Council was tested like never before. We all grew familiar with words and ways of working we could never have imagined. Throughout this report you will see how our contribution was key to setting up and running Covid Testing Centres, Community Testing, Track, Trace and Protect arrangements and Mass Vaccination Centre as well as other important work to keep people safe while continuing to provide key services and support businesses during the most challenging of times. We have also worked more closely than ever with partners including the Health Board, South Wales Police and the third sector to find better ways to get things done. Our responses to this unprecedented challenge, such as the roll-out of business support, were delivered at pace, in the best interests of residents and the health of our communities.

Despite the impact of Covid, we continued to deliver major projects and our ambitious work programme where we were able to do so. For example

- Continuing with the flood alleviation works across the County Borough.
- Keeping up with our programme of Town Centre developments in Pontypridd, Porth, Aberdare and Mountain Ash.
- Completing Bridge repairs in [Hopkinstown, Berw Road, Pontypridd](#) and Treherbert.
- Delivering the [Mountain Ash Cross Valley Link](#) and completed the award winning Llys Cadwyn development in Pontypridd.
- Completing repairs to Ponty Lido which was devastated by the floods of 2020.
- Continuing with our 21<sup>st</sup> Century school building and improvement programme and agreeing to progress a new school building on a new site for YGG Llyn-y-Forwyn.



- Opening new independent living accommodation and making good progress in our third [Extra Care facility, Cwrt yr Orsaf Pontypridd](#) so it remains on target to welcome residents later this year, and progressed our plans for a new Extra Care facility as part of the redevelopment of Dan y Mynydd in Porth.
- Building new high quality and low carbon industrial units at Coed Ely and Robertstown to support new and established businesses to grow.
- Employing more young people in [Graduate and Apprenticeship Schemes](#) than ever before, exceeded our recruitment target.
- Continuing to develop our work to reduce and tackle the impacts of climate change.

Overall, from the evidence we have presented in this report, we think the Council has made good progress throughout a year when we continually responded to new and fast moving events outside our control. The success of the vaccine programme is allowing us to slowly return to a 'new normal', to take the opportunities and meet those challenges that emerged over the last eighteen months as well as others such as Climate Change.

However, the Council remains positive and ambitious and as our services restart safely, we continue to be focused on making RCT the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy, and prosperous.

The Corporate Performance Report contains many examples of how the Council is working to improve the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural well-being of the residents and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf. It also shows what the Council's Independent Auditors have said about our work and progress.

I could not be prouder of the way staff and Councillors have responded to the unprecedented challenges over the last year to support those people in most need and to keep residents safe and well. Staff have gone over and above the call of duty and continually exceeded expectations. From taking on new and unfamiliar jobs, finding new ways to deliver long standing services, particularly to those most in need, and at the same time adapting quickly to the need to master new IT skills to help them to continue their work from home. All this and more during the most challenging of professional and personal circumstances. I have been continually amazed by and grateful for the resilience shown by staff, residents and communities including the hundreds of volunteers, who together were vital to keeping our vulnerable residents safe.

This commitment to our community and how we strive to be the best is why Rhondda Cynon Taf continues to be one of the most successful Councils in Wales, setting a high bar for ourselves and others.

As we emerge from the worst of times, we know we have more tough times ahead, where ambition for our communities will be more important than ever if we are to continue the pace of change, we have delivered in recent years. We are keen to revisit the old challenges and to meet head on those that are more recent. We want to take the opportunities that presented themselves during the pandemic. We also want to get back on track and to deliver all the ambitions we have set for ourselves and those that you have told us are important to you. Hopefully, this year we can do all this, without the shackles of a pandemic to hold us back.

I hope this Report helps you to understand how the Council has continued to deliver services in the exceptional circumstances of 2020/21 and how we are approaching both the challenges and

opportunities of 2021/22 and beyond. Please let us know what you think of our progress, and our plans for the future. Tell us what matters to you, and give us your ideas, and tell us what we can do to further improve the positive impact of the Council's work on or your community, your family and on you.

Thank you for your continuing interest in the Council.



Councillor Andrew Morgan

Leader, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

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## **Continuing to Deliver**

2020/21 was a year like no other. Across Council services, we adapted operations to respond to the Welsh Government's initial 'lockdown' in March 2020, phased reopening of some services in summer 2020, a short 'circuit breaker' in October 2020 and finally a second extended lock down beginning in December 2020. All these steps were put in place to stop the spread of the Covid-19 virus throughout communities, Wales and beyond. During this time the Council continued supporting and protecting residents, particularly those that were most vulnerable, supporting businesses and keeping staff safe, particularly those working on the 'front line'.

With the focus on keeping all our residents safe, we have worked more closely than ever with our partners including *the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board* and the third sector. Many Council staff were heavily involved in organising, managing and supporting vital Covid-19 related work, ranging from the initial Track and Trace calls and the Covid Community Testing Centres to the roll out of vaccinations. Not only were our staff key to the success of this joint work but so were our buildings, IT systems and equipment.

The delivery of all Council services has been affected and you will see throughout this report many of the ways in which staff and services have responded. For example

### **To support vulnerable people, we**

- Worked with the third sector to deliver food parcels and made contact with over 11,000 shielding residents by telephone or safely knocking doors where necessary. 3,393 of the shielding residents also received more direct help including with shopping, deliveries of prescriptions and food parcels, benefit advice and dog walking.
- Made sure that parents and carers of children who would normally receive free school meals were provided with funds to ensure the children had food at home.
- Supported businesses with grant payments and in Town Centres provided social distancing support and advice and ensured safe access to public toilets.
- Made sure that homeless people had access to temporary accommodation so that they were safe.
- Dealt with scammers that preyed on people at their most vulnerable.
- Continued to provide support to people experiencing Domestic Abuse.

### **To find new and different ways of keeping services and events going, we**

- Blended face to face learning with online and distance learning for pupils of all ages in our schools.
- Introduced ['order and collect'](#) services at some of our libraries as well as some home deliveries.
- Put in place Birth Registrations online.
- Put some of our Leisure Classes and Adult Education classes online.
- Held our first [Virtual](#) Careers Fair, Virtual and Original ['Once Upon a Panto'](#) and also a [Virtual](#) Nos Galan.

### **To help those people who relied on services that are less visible, we**

- Continued to support people and communities affected by floods.
- Kept vulnerable learners safe by opening learning Hubs.

- Found different ways to support the children and families who need extra help.
- Provided accommodation to keep homeless people safe and off the streets.
- Continued to provide help to people misusing substances.
- Put in place accommodation needed for Offenders on release.

As well as finding new and different ways of delivering business as 'unusual', we did not lose sight of our ambitions and our investment programme with work continuing whilst meeting social distancing Covid-19 requirements.

- We [Opened the Mountain Ash Cross Valley Link](#) to motorists, cyclists and pedestrians in October 2020.
- We progressed the work on the Porth Transport Hub which will bring together rail and bus journeys, scheduled to open in 2022.
- Contractor Willmott Dixon [completed the award winning Llys Cadwyn](#) in Pontypridd, providing business, services for residents and leisure facilities. Businesses and organisations started to open-up from the three buildings as restrictions allowed. A virtual tour is also [available](#). Bridge contractor Knights Brown also [completed the new Llys Cadwyn](#) bridge to Ynsyngarad Park which also serves as an extension to the Taff Vale walkway along the River Taff.
- We completed new school buildings and improvements in schools across the County Borough, including opening a new [low carbon primary school](#) building in Hirwaun.
- We progressed our programme of flood prevention work.
- We continued our waste and recycling collection services throughout the pandemic and continued to increase the amount of waste we recycled at - 66.74%, making progress towards our ambitious recycling target of 80% by 2025, also sending less waste to landfill than last year, 5,151 tonnes.
- We continued with the building works for [Cwrt yr Orsaf](#) the new Extra Care facility in Pontypridd.
- Lido Ponty was restored to its former glory with some additional improvements following the damage caused by the devastating Storm Dennis in February 2020 and [reopened in May 2021](#). Despite the early limits on numbers because of Covid restrictions, it has proved as popular as ever with visitors.

As restrictions lift and more of our residents are protected from the virus by vaccinations, we can safely start to return to resuming our ambitious programme for improvement delivering the range and levels of service that our residents have grown to expect, whilst at the same time keeping the best of the new ways of working that we have learnt throughout the last twelve months.

## **How we are performing**

Much of the data we have presented throughout this report is Covid related. We have not needed or collected this previously. Nationally, we have become familiar with the graphs and trends of Covid-19 infections, hospitalisations and sadly, deaths. Within the Council, the collection and use of relevant data has also helped us to direct resources to the people that need it most and to show the size of the challenge that we faced with our partners to keep people safe. This includes data about the number of our residents shielding and needing help, requests for food parcels and vaccines administered.

Services within the Council have been affected by the pandemic in different ways and this has had a knock-on effect on the data we have available. For example, we can show data for those services that continued mostly unchanged throughout the pandemic e.g., how many empty properties have been brought back into use and the amount of recycling collected. However, our Leisure Centres have been closed for a large proportion of the year and more recently have been used as Mass Vaccination Centres so the usual measure of people visiting centres for physical activity is meaningless this year. It is also hard to compare some data over time, for example school attendance has been significantly impacted by school closures and self-isolation measures.

The usual national data collections for 2020/21 have been patchy and some data collected may not be as robust as usual or accurately show progress this year. Because of this we have little data to compare. However, we have continued to submit key data to Welsh Government e.g. Adults and Children's weekly returns to identify any capacity issues, which was used to plan and take action during the pandemic and we have continued to monitor our progress against national target e.g. we recycled 66.74% of our waste, which already almost meets the Welsh Government target of 70% by 2025 and bringing us closer to our own ambitious target of 80% by the same date.

We are keen to restart full national data collections as soon as possible. Comparing our performance with other councils can raise more questions than answers. This is positive as it can help us to better understand what we do, learn from better practice as well as provide us with an indication of how well we are performing and where we can set ourselves more ambitious targets. If we can see that our performance is not improving over time and remains below the Wales Average without good reason, we can then focus on what we need to do to improve.

If you would like to see information about Rhondda Cynon Taf and other Councils across Wales for the limited amount of information collected in an easy-to-read format, you can find it in [My Local Council](#) and [Infobase Cymru](#).

We are also strengthening our use of data that looks ahead, using this to help us prepare for the future e.g. the impact of extreme weather because of Climate Change and how we can best support an ageing population.

Performance indicators and data are not the only measures of how well services are performing, nor do they tell the whole story, but they can help. We also look at residents' views, survey responses and the comments, compliments and complaints we receive through our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and from social media channels to help complete a picture of our performance, see Sections 15 and 16.

Throughout this report, you will see many examples of how we seek and use feedback to shape and improve our services. We have learned much from our work to tackle the impacts of the pandemic and we know we have more to do if we are to build on this and understand more about our communities for future service planning.

We are also keen to learn from other Councils and organisations so that we keep up with, learn from and apply best practice that works for RCT, wherever it is from.

Our regulators regularly report on our work and provide independent feedback about where we are doing well and where we can improve. Our regulators include

- [Audit Wales](#) for making sure that public money is being spent and managed wisely.
- [HM Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales](#) (ESTYN) for quality and standards in education and training providers in Wales.
- [Care Inspectorate Wales](#) (CIW) for social care and childcare in Wales.

The reports from our regulators are provided to Councillors for scrutinising and checking and we also make reports available for everyone to see in one place on our [Website](#).

We also need to contribute to the seven national Well-being goals for Wales set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which is described in more detail in Section 18. In December 2020, the Welsh Government published its fourth report, '[Well-being of Wales 2020](#)' which sets out a summary of the progress being made across 44 public bodies in Wales, to meet these seven national goals, using [46 national measures](#). Whilst the update report is not about Rhondda Cynon Taf and analyses the data for 2019, we can consider how we are and can contribute to the 7 national goals as well as use using the findings to challenge ourselves.

Points from this national report providing national trends included

<b>A prosperous Wales</b>	<i>"The nature of employment in the sectors that have been impacted the most by the pandemic means that effects will tend to worsen inequalities. The most affected tend to be low paid, in insecure employment, and young people."</i>
<b>A resilient Wales</b>	<i>"Air pollution continues to be a significant health issue, with increases in the levels of two of the main air pollutants between 2017 and 2018."</i>
<b>A healthier Wales</b>	<i>"There has been little change in healthy lifestyle behaviours among adults in recent years. Unhealthy behaviours are generally less common among those in the least deprived areas."</i>
<b>A more equal Wales</b>	<i>"The more indirect impacts of socio-economic harms are more likely to be felt by young people, women, disabled people and ethnic minority groups. We expect this to have an impact on many of the national indicators during 2020/21."</i>
<b>A Wales of cohesive communities</b>	<i>"Data from the monthly National Survey for Wales shows that people who feel a sense of community has increased significantly, from 52% in 2018-19 to 75% in September 2020."</i>

<b>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</b>	<i>“The national indicators on the Welsh language are broadly consistent with previous years. However there has been a slight decrease in the percentage of people speaking Welsh daily and being able to speak more than just a few words of Welsh.”</i>
<b>A globally responsible Wales</b>	<i>“April and May 2020 saw significant decreases in some pollutant levels (for example, nitrogen oxides), consistent with reduced traffic levels. However, levels of other pollutants, such as fine particulate matter and ozone increased.”</i>

[The Thriving Places Index Wales for Local Conditions 2020](#) measures many different services and different providers categorised by Place and Environment, Mental and Physical health, Education and Learning, Work and Local Economy, People and Community. Across all categories, the 2020 data gives RCT an overall rating of 4.43 out of a possible 10. This is a slight increase from 2019. The highest rating category in 2020 was 5.56 for Place and Environment and the lowest was 3.58 for Mental and Physical health.

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## **Delivering our priorities in 2020/21**

The Council put in place its first [Corporate Plan \*The Way Ahead\*' in 2016](#). This Plan set the direction for everything we did between 2016 and 2020 and set the firm foundations for our new [Corporate Plan for 2020-24, \*'Making a Difference'\*](#), setting out our new priorities that will help us to achieve our vision.

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

We will do this by

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

These priorities are underpinned by more detailed commitments, plans and targets that we have set ourselves.

We implemented this new plan in April 2020, despite the significant challenges facing the Council arising from the unprecedented flooding in early 2020 and in the face of a global pandemic. All our services were affected in some way during the last year, with many at the forefront of responding directly to these challenges.

These events affected what we set out to achieve in 2020/21, and our revised plans were published in our [Corporate Performance Report for 2020](#). In the last year we have made positive progress in delivering these plans whilst also playing our part to keep residents and communities safe and to support local businesses during significant and ongoing periods of uncertainty, particularly as the country adapted to the changing Covid-19 alert levels.

Our work has been reviewed and checked by Councillors and at the same time, the [Quarterly performance reports](#) have been put on the Council’s website so that residents and other interested organisations can see our progress for themselves. We are now at the end of the 2020/21 reporting year, so this report contains the year-end assessment of our progress and provides examples of where our work has made a difference to the lives of people that live, work and visit Rhondda Cynon Taf, and also where we need to do better.

This year, the Welsh Government introduced a new law, the [Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#). This new law introduced many changes for Councils in Wales which were set out in a report to [Cabinet in March 2021](#). One of these changes is about making sure that the Council knows where it is [strong and where it can do better](#). The Council has a strong performance culture in place. We are open and transparent about our work and have well established support and challenge processes in place to see what we are doing well and what we need to do to improve and our independent regulator, [Audit Wales](#) has confirmed that we have met our improvement planning and reporting duties. We also meet a wide range of [statutory planning and reporting duties](#). Because of this, we are already well placed to meet the requirements of this new law.



No single report or plan can tell you about the many services that we deliver directly to, or organise for our residents, communities, and businesses. However, you can find out more about all the services we deliver, the progress we continue to make and how we continue to support residents and communities, on the [Council's website](#), [Council's Twitter](#), [Council's Instagram](#) or [Council's Facebook](#) pages.

To continue to help us achieve our ambitions and to respond to the impact of increasing financial pressures, we are continually looking at ways we can make more of the resources we have available by tackling:

**Digitalisation** so that customers can access more of our services online and helping to increase access to technology for people and communities.

The unprecedented events of 2021-22, of necessity, increased the pace of our digital change plans, so that we were able to keep services accessible and the business of the Council running. Early work so that

- residents and community groups could be kept informed about service changes and help available.
- democratic processes could continue virtually.
- online virtual meetings with vulnerable people could be held

Working with our partners we supported the Cwm Taf Health Board with a digital solution to manage the vaccination programmes and to make the best use of the vaccines through request for short notice appointments. This meant as many of our residents as possible received their vaccines as the national priority group rollout continued.

Examples of digitalisation within the Council included putting in place a more joined up way for businesses to apply and provide evidence for Covid business grants. By putting the applications and the other grant requirements online in the same process, we were able to make quicker decisions and speedy payments to RCT businesses. We dealt with over 10,000 grant applications and paid out approximately £66 million pounds in grants.

We also

- progressed plans to digitalise our flood defences so that we can remotely monitor key flood defences from our central control room in Ty Elai.
- continued to roll out free Wi-Fi adding Porth, Tonypany and Treorchy town centres to Aberdare, Mountain Ash and Ferndale to support local businesses and encourage people to visit when it was safe to do so. Pontypridd will be live soon.

As part of the Welsh Government's '[Hwb](#)' digital Transformation Project, we are making sure that every school is able to deliver the requirements for digital skills at the heart of the new curriculum through installing new IT systems. In addition, we worked closely with schools to provide over 5,500 laptops, tablets and Wi-Fi access to learners without home access during the pandemic.

Our work to keep the Council's services and business going, our learners learning and our partners across the region supported was set out in a presentation to Councillors in [March 2021](#).

Digitalisation was key to continuing to deliver and also improving services during 2020/21 and we are building on the gains we made during the year to learn and improve further. We are working on a revised Digital Strategy which will be available by the end of 2021.

Other examples of ways that digitalisation is helping people and communities can be found in our detailed evaluations for [PEOPLE](#), [PLACES](#) and [PROSPERITY](#).

**Commercialisation** so that the Council takes more opportunities to act as a business to earn income rather than cut budgets.

Our high level approach and appetite to commercial opportunities was set out in a report to a meeting of [Council on 3 March 2021](#). Our approach includes how we will train our staff, achieve best value in cost and quality in what we buy and use our assets to generate income, such as renting our assets to create income and new jobs.

We also continue to trade commercially through our wholly owned company, [Ty Amgen](#) seeking opportunities to extend trading operations and maximise income generation and profit and we operate as part of a Joint Venture, Redstart, with Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil for civil/municipal engineering services.

Other examples of commercialisation can be found in our detailed evaluations for [PROSPERITY](#) and [PLACES](#).

**Early Intervention and Prevention** so that we spend more on stopping problems and less on trying to fix them once they have happened.

We are committed to providing services that help people to avoid problems or to stop them getting worse. You will see many examples throughout this report. For example, for children and families the [Resilient Families Service](#) ensure families in RCT receive the right support at the right time, for young people we put in place cultural, sporting and other activities to prevent them from getting involved in crime and anti-social behaviour, for our older people we deliver training in our Libraries that help them to keep up to date with technology and prevent digital exclusion. We know that people of all ages can experience loneliness and isolation so we have a range of community based activities and support that can help.

During 2020/21 the way we were able to deliver these services was affected by the impact of Covid-19 restrictions and our work to keep people safe and prevent the spread of infection. In 2021-22 we will be accelerating the pace of our work to those services that were so badly disrupted.

Other examples of our early intervention and prevention work can be found in our detailed evaluations for [PEOPLE](#) and [PLACES](#).

**Independence** so that our vulnerable residents stay as well as they can for as long as they can.

Supporting our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities to remain independent and have a good quality of life is one of our key priorities. Examples of the services we deliver include providing technology that will help to keep them safe day to day through our [Lifeline+ service](#), providing support to help them to return home safely from hospital and providing safe and modern places that they can live in so that they can maintain a good quality of life.

During 2020/21 many of the services we deliver e.g. providing Aids and equipment and sensory services and service to support more complex needs, were affected by the impact of Covid-19 restrictions. During 2021-22 we will be accelerating the pace of our work to those services that were so badly disrupted.

Other examples of our early intervention work can be found in our detailed evaluation for [PEOPLE](#).

**Efficient and Effective Organisation** so that we challenge everything we do to see if we can do it better.

The necessity of home working with availability of appropriate ICT tools have continued to drive efficiencies, including reducing travel time and the cost of energy and ‘consumables’ in our buildings. The lessons we have learned and the feedback from our staff, residents and businesses will help us to shape the future as we emerge more fully from Government restrictions.

Many of our efficiencies have and will also be driven by digitisation as set out above, and within the Council we are also continuing our work to put in place a new HR and Payroll system iTrent that will make these processes seamless, more efficient, and effective as well as reduce administration of different associated systems.

The Council set its 2021/22 Revenue Budget on [10th March 2021](#), more information can be found in Section 10 – Making the Best of our Budget.

During 2020/21 we also continued to embed the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) into the Council’s work and priorities. The Act means that as well as the Council continually improving its services, it also needs to carry out ‘Sustainable Development’ which is improving the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural well-being of the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Act also asks us to “maximise our contributions” to seven national Well-being Goals, which you will see throughout this report. This Act applies to 44 public bodies in Wales including all Councils, Health Boards, Fire and Rescue Services and Natural Resources Wales, further detail can be found in Section 18 which describes in more detail our approach to delivering the Act.

Over the last eighteen months, our work with partners has never been closer or stronger as we joined together to meet the unprecedented Health, Social, Economic and Environmental challenges created by both the floods and the Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout this time, we have learnt even more about what each of us has to offer and we will continue to build on these strong relationships to continue to improve the services to our residents, communities and businesses.

As we progress our plans, we will continue to involve people and communities, think about the effect what we do now has on people and communities in the future, carefully plan what we do so that we can work with others where it is best to do so, and put in place services that will help prevent problems from happening or getting worse.

We will be doing everything we can to make sure that all Council services continue to recover as quickly and as fully as they are safely allowed and that we continue to invest in major developments across the County Borough. We will also take full advantage of the lessons we are learning from dealing with the pandemic to better support our residents, communities and local businesses. By doing so, we will deliver our vision for RCT ***“to be the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy, and prosperous”*** through our three priorities, **PEOPLE, PLACES** and **PROSPERITY**.

Whilst there can be no doubt of the significant impact of the events of the last 12 months, the Council continues to pursue its ambitions to make a difference to everyone who lives, works and visits the County Borough.

The next sections of this report set out a summary of the progress we have made over the last year and our plans for the next.

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## **PEOPLE in Rhondda Cynon Taf are independent, healthy and successful**

We put in place plans to help PEOPLE to be independent, healthy and successful because we want to give people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds the best chance to live a good quality of life. We believe that by staying healthy and active and involved in communities we can help people to stay well, and where people do need help, we need to make it easier for them to find it. Residents told us this is important to them and their families.

During 2020/21, our commitment to keeping people in Rhondda Cynon Taf independent, healthy and successful was tested in ways we could not have imagined. Firstly, by the floods in early 2020 which were closely followed by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our plans and focus were on keeping all our residents, especially those most vulnerable, safe and well, both physically and mentally. We also needed to give people the right information at the right time as the Covid rules changed, and to work with partners to take steps to stop the spread of the virus. This included setting up new arrangements to Track and Trace people who either had, or were at risk of catching the virus. Our care staff worked in very challenging circumstances, with some moving out of their family homes to meet the many and fast-moving changes demanded by the various national lockdowns and the firebreak, to protect vulnerable people of all ages. From child-care in our Community Hubs, providing foster care, social work and support to families and caring for older people in residential care and in their own homes, services continued to care for and protect the most vulnerable people in communities.

During the early part of the pandemic, we contacted over 11,000 residents who were at risk of Covid to check they were safe and well and were able to safely organise any help they needed from family and friends. For those that needed help, people in RCT continued to show the community spirit for which they are famed, and we were overwhelmed with volunteering requests from residents. Volunteers came directly to the Council via Volunteering Wales and Interlink and from our staff. Working through [seven Community Resilience Hubs](#) across the County Borough, volunteers and staff helped 3,393 of our residents with shopping, food parcel delivery and prescriptions, employment and benefit advice and friendly phone calls and even dog walking. This help was vital to keeping residents safe and we received letters from residents showing their appreciation of the help they received

We strengthened our partnerships and worked closer than ever with the Health Board, Welsh Government, neighbouring local authorities, South Wales Police, the third sector and other partners to find every possible way we could make the best use of all our resources. This included providing practical help to shielded residents and foodbanks, turning one of our Leisure Centres into a Food Distribution Centre, administering food grants to community groups and setting up community and mobile Covid testing and Vaccine Centres.

You will see the many ways we worked within communities described within this section and throughout this report. However, as the pandemic continued, RCT residents and communities experienced a significant number of Covid related deaths. Unfortunately, the numbers were consistently amongst the [highest in Wales and the UK](#).

Whilst the reasons for the high death rates may be complex and varied, what we know is that people with underlying health conditions were at greater risk from the effects of the virus. We also know from [Welsh Government data](#) that the almost half of the population of RCT (47%) reported at least

one longstanding illness in 2018/19 and 2019/20, 35% had some limitation because of long standing illness and, that RCT has higher than Wales average levels of respiratory system complaints; Musculoskeletal complaints and Endocrine and metabolic diseases, which include diabetes and obesity.

[Latest available data](#) tells us that the population of RCT 241,873 (2020) has increased from 231,937, 4.28%, in 2001. Currently, almost 20% of our population is older than 65 years old. As people are living longer, the proportion of older people in RCT has grown by 23.7% from 37,807 in 2001 to 46,755 in 2020. We want to help our residents of all ages to stay as well as they can for as long as they can. However, age related conditions in more older people, will mean an increase in the need for health and social care including for people living with dementia, which is expected to rise by 64% by 2030.

We know that in RCT we have high numbers of vulnerable residents of all ages as well as deprived communities. In 2020/21 there were 694 children in the care of the Council with the greatest number for both boys and girls between the ages of 10 to 15 years old. We also know that over the next few years we need to plan for a post Covid recovery with uncertain funding. We will take the lessons we have learned from the past year and keep the best, including our stronger ties with residents, communities and our partners. The expectations and demands from our residents will be higher than ever.

The steps we are taking to help PEOPLE to be independent, healthy and successful are

- Supporting our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life.
- Encouraging residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental well-being.
- Integrating health and social care and providing support for those with mental health problems and complex needs.
- Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do.

## PEOPLE

### Latest available data tells us....

**Population** - Latest estimate [241,873](#), an increase of 0.25% on 2019.

0-15 years 18.6%	16-64 62%	○ 65+ 19.3%
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### Community & Equality

- 24% of children in RCT are living in poverty. However, when the cost of housing is deducted from household income, this figure increases to 32% - *Source: [End Child Poverty](#).*
- As at 31 March 2021, there were
  - 717 children in the care of the Council
  - 464 children on the Child Protection Register at significant risk of harm.

### Physical Health

- Average life expectancy at birth in RCT was 77.53 for men and 81.1 for women (2016-2018) - *Source: [Public Health Wales Observatory Profile](#).*
- Average healthy life expectancy at birth in RCT is 61.7 for men and 64.2 for women (2016-18) - *Source: [Public Health Wales Observatory Profile](#).*
- On average, people living in less deprived areas in RCT live longer than those from more deprived areas. Men can expect to live 6.7 years longer, and women 4.3 years. However, this difference described as the 'inequality gap' is not as big as in some other parts of Wales - *Source: [Public Health Wales Observatory Profile](#).*
- 47% of adults in RCT reported at least one long-standing health condition in the last year. *Source: [Stats Wales](#)*
- RCT has the 3rd highest rate in Wales of people who are [Clinically Extremely Vulnerable \(CEV\)](#), 46.3 per 1,000 population.
- [RCT residents reporting their health to be](#)
  - "bad or very bad" is the second highest in Wales
  - "good or very good" is the third lowest in Wales.
- 26% of RCT residents participated in sporting activities 3 or more times per week.
- 12% of adults in RCT showed less than 2 healthy lifestyle behaviours.
- Men, middle-aged adults, and those in the most deprived areas were most likely to show less than two of the healthy behaviours.

### Mental Health & Well-being

- 13% of people in RCT are lonely. *Source: [Stats Wales](#)*
- RCT 'scores' in the [Thriving Places](#) Wales index measuring aspects of well-being, i.e.
  - 4.47 for Social Isolation, the same as in 2018.
  - 3.58 for Mental and Physical Health, slightly higher than 3.36 in 2018.  
*10 is the best possible and 0 being the worst.*
- Cwm Taf has the second highest rate of alcohol specific death in Wales 2016-18 - *Source: PHW The annual profile for substance misuse 2018-19* [ *Source: [Data Mining Report](#)*].



## Culture

- 48% of RCT residents agreed that they belong to the area; that people from different backgrounds get on well together; and that people treat each other with respect - *Source: WFG indicator.*
- 64% of RCT residents attended arts, culture or heritage events at least 3 times in the last year. *Source: [Stats Wales](#)*

## Looking Ahead.....

### By 2043, the population of

- Wales is projected to rise by 4.6% to 3.31 Million - *Source: [Stats Wales](#)*
- RCT is expected to rise by up to 4.7% to 254,145 - *Source: [Stats Wales](#)*
- RCT residents over the age of 65 is expected to climb by 18.2% to 57,429. This means that the % of the population that are over 65 will rise from 19.4% to 22.6% - *Source: [Stats Wales](#)*

### Health & Well-being

- Life expectancy from birth in Wales is predicted to rise

	2020	2029
Males	88	89.1
Females	90.6	91.5

*Source: [Public Health Wales Observatory Profile](#)*

- By 2025, 68.7% of adults in Cwm Taf will be overweight or obese - *Source: [Public Health Wales Observatory Profile](#)*
- By 2035, the number of adults with a common mental health disorder in Wales will increase by 7.2% to 447,159 on the 2017 baseline, while the number of people aged 65+ living with dementia will increase by 64% to 72,769 in the same period - *Source: [Public Health Wales Futures for Wales Report Page 33](#)*
- By 2035, there will also be an increase in the number of adults with chronic conditions in Wales, including an increase of 18.2% of people with diabetes to 220,376, an increase of 27% of people with heart conditions to 321,986 and an increase of 29.5% of people suffering a stroke to 90,214 - *Source: [Public Health Wales Futures for Wales Report Page 33](#)*

## General Statement of Progress

**In 2020 we said we would continue our work to support PEOPLE to be independent, healthy and successful. Overall, despite the challenging circumstances faced by our clients and staff and introducing a new virus specific service, Track and Trace, we were able to make good progress as a Council and as part of wider partnerships. We changed our focus to support our most vulnerable residents and families and where we were able, continued the planned building work on new residential accommodation. We know that there is much to do help keep our residents of all ages and backgrounds safe and well particularly for those people whose support has been affected by the impact of the Covid pandemic.**

Alongside our work in delivering our PEOPLE priority, we are continually building on our experience of doing things differently, what has worked and what we need to do better. We are also increasing



our understanding of the effect of the changes we are making for the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf and the wider Cwm Taf Region.

We work as part of the [Cwm Taf Public Services Board](#) (PSB) to deliver the changes set out in the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan. During the pandemic the importance and value of volunteers and our third sector partners cannot be underestimated as they provided a lifeline to many of our residents who were shielding, vulnerable or lonely and afraid. We will be building on this strengthened relationship to continue to support strong communities.

We also work as part of the [Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board](#) (RPB) which aims to make a difference to people's lives by involving them, listening and then taking action together to transform the way services are delivered. The priorities for the RPB are people with learning disabilities & autism; people with mental health problems; children & young people; unpaid carers; older people & dementia and physical disabilities and sensory impairment. Stay Well@home is one of the RPB's more well-known projects. From outside these arrangements the three councils, the UHB and PHW have come together to create a shared response to the health emergency created by the pandemic which has included the Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) service. The Board's work programme includes updating what we know about the health and social care needs of the people who live in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region through a [Population Needs Assessment](#).

Our work within the People priority is overseen by Cabinet, relevant Scrutiny Committees and, where appropriate the [Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board](#), [Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board](#) and [Cwm Taf Public Services Board](#). Some of the services delivering this Priority have also been inspected by independent Auditors i.e. Audit Wales and Care Inspectorate Wales. You can find out more about their findings on [our website](#).

**You can see more detail of our progress against what we set out to achieve in 2020/21 in our [PEOPLE Performance Evaluation](#).**

## In 2020 we said that we would

### Support our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life

#### Among other things we

- worked with partners to make sure we focussed our resources to help people get out of hospital more quickly and safely and supported them in the community. This was especially important during the Winter 2020/21.
- restarting [Stay Well@Home \(Phase 2\)](#) which provides GPs, District Nurses and Welsh Ambulance Service with access to an assessment and rapid response preventative and rehabilitative services 7 days a week and avoids any unnecessary conveyancing or admissions to hospitals.
- continued to work in partnership with Linc Cymru to progress [Cwrt yr Orsaf](#), our new extra care housing scheme in Pontypridd that will be completed later this year. We also agreed proposals for a new Extra Care housing scheme as part of the redevelopment of Dan y Mynydd in Porth.
- worked with housing providers to complete modern Supported Housing accommodation including:
  - [Crown Avenue, Treorchy in January 2021](#), with twelve one-bed flats
  - [Oxford Street Mountain Ash in April 2021](#), with eight high quality apartmentsThis accommodation will provide adults with learning disabilities access to the support they need to live an independent life.
- helped Care Homes to put in place high levels of infection control, to keep their residents safe and allow safe visits from families when Welsh Government rules allowed.  
*[Covid restrictions](#), outbreaks and the Public Health Wales (PHW) restrictions resulted in fewer care home placements becoming available, particularly for nursing and dementia care. As a result, some people were in hospital for longer than usual.*
- Reopened the [Regional Community Equipment Services](#) to meet increasing demand for community equipment in health and social care.
- launched the [RCT Lifeline+](#) Service, helping people to stay safe and independent in their homes whilst giving them and their families, reassurance at the touch of a button.
- reinstated the 'At Home' library service for vulnerable residents so that they got their books delivered safely to their door.

#### Our plans for 2021- 22 include

- Opening 'Cwrt yr Orsaf' Extra Care Housing Scheme in Pontypridd.
- Starting work on the new Extra Care Housing in Porth, subject to planning approval.
- Finalising the plans for the new Extra Care scheme in Treorchy.
- Allocating apartments to residents of the new Oxford Buildings Supported Housing Scheme.
- Opening the Elm Road Supported Housing Scheme in Llanhari.
- Progressing the plans for the changes to our Residential Care homes alongside the new Extra Care Housing so that together they are better able to meet the needs of our older residents.
- Continuing to use the new technology we put in place during the pandemic for people and families and see how others can benefit from this in the future for example virtual visits to ensure residents, where possible, can stay connected with residents.
- Finding out more about the needs of carers so that they can be helped to care for their loved ones at home.

- Providing support and equipment that allows people to stay more independent at home including helping them to manage their own care arrangements through direct payments.
- Providing outreach services in the community to residents who traditionally would have attended day services.
- Making sure that all our staff are trained to focus on people's strengths and talents so that we can better help with the things that are important to their well-being and what they want to achieve.

#### **We will also show you our progress by...**

- The number of reablement packages in place which improve independence and reducing the need for support.
- The number carers that take up our support to help them to care for their loved ones.
- How safe and happy the residents in our new housing schemes tell us they feel.

#### **Encourage residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental well-being**

##### **Among other things we**

- provided a range of free online home and garden workouts via our [Leisure for Life app](#), safe running and cycling routes within Welsh Government guidelines, along with [ideas and inspiration](#) for family work outs.
- introduced open air classes, making good use of our parks and 3G pitches when Covid conditions allowed.
- promoted "essential exercise" for physical and mental health benefits to our residents and communities e.g. Walking Challenge, and used Social Media to celebrate the great ways our residents' kept themselves fit and active.

##### **Our plans for 2021 - 22 include**

- Getting leisure and fitness activities in our centres safely up and running.
- Opening new Leisure and Fitness Facilities at Llys Cadwyn, Pontypridd and reopening Hawthorn Swimming Pool.
- Providing more and better opportunities for people to exercise and be active outdoors.
- Live streaming more classes for people who choose to exercise at home.
- Developing activities for people experiencing long-Covid that will help them to improve their health and fitness.
- Increasing levels of engagement and participation in the arts and culture, by providing in person and online events.
- Continuing to develop our Community Hubs as places that people can meet and socialise, strengthening relationships with residents and community groups and finding out what is [important to our residents](#).

#### **We will also show you our progress by...**

- The number of opportunities we provide for outdoor exercise and how many people take part.
- The opportunities we provide for people to engage in arts and cultural activities and how many people take part.

- What residents tell us is important to them.
- What people think of our Community Hubs.
- What people think of our new indoor and outdoor leisure and fitness facilities e.g. in Llys Cadwyn and Hawthorn

### **Integrate health and social care and providing support for those with mental health problems and complex needs**

#### **Among other things we**

Put in place a Contact Tracing Service for RCT which was later expanded to include the whole Cwm Taf Morgannwg Region. This service was key to protecting communities by identifying Covid cases and the contacts with people who may have been at risk of passing on the infection. To manage the high rate of infection across RCT, the Council's public health team rigorously challenged and applied Welsh Government guidance, advising residents, care settings, schools and businesses about how to reduce the risk of infection. They also worked alongside South Wales Police where it was necessary to enforce these rules.

#### **Behind the scenes**

we worked with 115 schools across RCT to improve the way contact information for parents and carers was made available to Track and Trace Teams. This new, more efficient, system allowed Track and Trace teams to contact parents more quickly and easily and keep Covid infection and spread in schools under control.

#### **Our plans for 2021- 22 include**

- Continuing to help keep our residents safe from Covid by providing Track and Trace support and helping with community testing across the County Borough and social distancing in our Town Centres.
- Continuing to find new and better ways to get residents safely out of hospital with the care and support they need at home.
- Working with health to make sure that end of life care in communities meets the needs of people and families.
- Continuing to support people through social prescribing activities in the community including exercise classes, Adult Education classes, Digital Fridays and Library reading clubs.

#### **We will also show you our progress by...**

- Continuing to work with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board to reduce delays in people being discharged from hospital.
- Number of positive cases and contacts followed up successfully.
- Number of people attending adult education classes, Digital Fridays, library reading clubs, etc.

## **Improve services for children and young people and ensure the needs of children are considered in everything we do**

### **Among other things we**

- put in place 25 [emergency child care hubs](#) across RCT so that vulnerable children were able to continue to learn safely. Pre-school children with greatest support needs also received daily childcare in these hubs.
- worked with our partners to make sure that strong safeguarding arrangements remained in place for children and adults at risk.
- continued to protect those children at risk of harm. We have used technology to provide statutory services and made safe visits to those most at risk.
- opened a new residential home, 'Carn Igli', Aberdare for children between 8 and 18 with complex needs who cannot remain with their families.
- Streamed over 250 'virtual' activities for young people, a mix of fun and information sessions e.g. Sexual Health. We also continued to support young people, including with their mental health, through WhatsApp, telephone and Zoom calls and where necessary and safe in face-to-face discussions. When we were able, we restarted our street-based work and during the Autumn we contacted nearly 3,000 young people across RCT. Some of our young people who needed activities and 'something to do' were able to get involved in community projects like the ['Digital Bench'](#) project in Pontypridd.

### **Our plans for 2021- 22 include**

- Working with families who are experiencing difficulties earlier so that they have the support they need to stay together.
- Providing more and better information, advice and support for
  - families by launching a new RCT Families website and
  - young people in a new App.
- Working with young people to help understand and shape a plan to involve them in sport, cultural and other activities and away from youth anti-social and criminal behaviour.
- Providing [school holiday fun and activities](#) in 15 of our schools.
- Making sure that those children that cannot remain with their families can be looked after closer to home.
- Making sure that the young people in our care are listened to and their experiences can be used to develop services in the future.
- Making sure that the children leaving our care have the right support e.g. finding the right housing, to support them to fulfil their potential.
- Making sure everyone, no matter where they live, can access Early Years support e.g. parenting support, early language support and regular access to health visitors.

### **Covid by Numbers**

#### **RCT Contact Tracing**

June 2020 - March 2021

Covid Cases - 20, 686

Leading to 50,000 contacts

#### **Investigated**

365 clusters of Covid infection in hospitality, care settings, workplaces and the service sector.

#### **Served**

89 premises improvement notices.

18 closure notices to businesses inspected which breached Covid restrictions.

#### **Cwm Taf Morgannwg Contact Tracing**

1 September 2020 – 31 March 2021

Covid Cases – 39,525

Leading to 93,669 contacts

#### **Cwm Taf Morgannwg Schools**

16 September 2020 – 31 March 2021

2,795 cases reported but clusters of infection were contained through Contact Tracing.

**We will also show you our progress by...**

- Number of families with increased resilience following completed intervention with the Resilient Families Service.
- Supporting families at the earliest opportunity so that fewer children are looked after.
- Number of young people participating in summer holiday activities.
- Number of young people leaving our care who are in employment, education or training.

<b>Prosperous</b>	<b>Resilient</b>	<b>Healthier</b>	<b>More Equal</b>	<b>Cohesive Communities</b>	<b>Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language</b>	<b>Globally Responsible</b>
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

You can see more detail about how we will continue our work to help PEOPLE in Rhondda Cynon Taf 'to be independent, healthy and successful' in our [2021-22 PEOPLE Plan](#).

DRAFT

## **PLACES where people are proud to live, work and play.**

We know that having a clean, pleasant and well-maintained environment is important to residents. Having efficient recycling and waste collections, welcoming green spaces, clean streets and well-maintained roads are some of the ways we can make residents' daily lives more pleasant as well as for our visitors who come to enjoy all that Rhondda Cynon Taf has to offer. However, our greatest challenge will be to play our part in tackling Climate Change. We have set ourselves a goal of being a Carbon Neutral Council by 2030, and doing everything we can so that the whole County Borough is as close to Carbon Neutral by 2030 this includes improving public transport and generating our own energy from natural sources and waste.

During 2020/21, our biggest immediate challenges were dealing with the devastation caused by the floods Ciara, Dennis and Jorge which had such devastating effects on our residents, homes, communities and businesses, also continuing to deliver services during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The work arising from the floods which brought such devastation to the lives and homes of residents saw the Council working with partners and communities to provide help. This help ranged from delivering food, clothing, home items, helping people to clear and clean out their homes to providing financial assistance and emergency temporary accommodation for people affected, with Pentre amongst the worst hit areas. The floods also caused damage to bridges, river walls, culverts, roads and parks across the County Borough, including the recently reopened Lido. The repairs to these 'assets' have been completed or are underway. The damage also increased the risk of landslips and on Tylorstown Tip, over 60,000 tonnes of material off the hillside blocked the river valley, damaged a foul sewer, and covered a watermain and a cycle path. You will see more information about how the remediation works are progressing below. Managing flood risk remains one of our key priorities, and we are improving the steps we take as a Council and also working with our partners, including Natural Resources Wales and Dwr Cymru, to better protect our communities. You can see a review of the Council's response to Storm Dennis [here](#).

The emergence of Covid-19 as we were dealing with the devastating fall out of the floods was our other immediate challenge. However, even during the worst of the restrictions, by making sure that our staff were able to work safely, we were able to continue essential services e.g. collecting waste and recycling and making improvements to our roads, bridges and pavements. It also included keeping our Community Recycling Centres open when it was safe to do so and also prosecuting for fly tipping. Nevertheless, other services e.g. those that help keep people safe and active were affected by national lock down restrictions and the 'fire break'. Our services that support people with substance misuse problems and their families and also those people who were experiencing domestic abuse had to change as face-to-face meetings were not always possible. We also continued to deal with the rogue traders and scammers who found new and different ways to exploit people, particularly those who were isolated and vulnerable.

Many of our staff who couldn't do their 'normal' jobs or work from home, took on new and different jobs. This included staff who help to keep people active and fit in our Leisure Centres and Parks and also our Enforcement Teams. Staff were willing to do what was needed to support the people, communities and businesses of Rhondda Cynon Taf and to keep people safe. You will see many examples of this throughout this report.

We now have big challenges ahead. We have set ourselves ambitious targets to tackle flood risk, reduce, reuse or recycle our waste, preparing for other impacts of climate change and playing our part to protect the planet. We also want to prepare for a positive and safe future for our residents and communities making the most of our parks, green spaces and leisure centres to help people to stay mentally and physically fit and healthy.

The steps we are taking to make PLACES where people are proud to live work and play are

- Keeping RCT clean, sending as little waste as possible to landfill, meeting our recycling targets and reducing our carbon footprint.
- Keeping the County Borough moving, including improvements to roads and pavements and public transport, whilst also improving air quality
- Ensuring the County Borough is one of the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion and where residents feel safe.
- Getting the best out of our parks by looking after and investing in our greenspaces.

### General Statement of Progress

**In 2020, we said we would continue our work to ‘create PLACES where people are proud to live, work and play’. Despite the challenges created by flooding and the Covid-19 pandemic over the last year, we continued to make good progress as a Council, and as part of wider partnerships, exceeding many of our expectations including our recycling and road improvements. We also exceeded many of the short-term targets we set ourselves. However, we know we have more to do, especially in those services where Covid restrictions have slowed or even stopped progress, and also to achieve our longer-term ambitions.**

Alongside our work in delivering our PLACES priority we are continually building on our experience of doing things differently, what has worked and what we need to do better. We are also increasing our understanding of the effect of the changes we are making for the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf and the wider Cwm Taf Region.

Our work within the PLACES priority is overseen by Cabinet, relevant Scrutiny Committees and, where appropriate the [Cardiff Capital Region Cabinet](#), [Cwm Taf Public Services Board](#) and the [Cwm Taf Community Safety Partnership Board](#).

**You can see more detail of our progress against what we set out to achieve in 2020/21 in our [PLACES Performance Evaluation](#).**



## Latest available data tells us....

### Transport and Travel

- 1,100 Million vehicle miles were travelled throughout RCT in 2020 the second highest number of miles travelled in Wales for 2020 (Source: [GovUK Road Traffic Stats TRA8901](#)). The majority (77.7%) were travelled by car, a percentage decrease of 4.52% from the previous year (Source: [GovUK Road Traffic Stats TRA8902](#)).
- Approximately 33% of RCT residents walked for over 10 minutes every day, the second highest percentage in Wales. 4% of residents cycled more than once a month, the third lowest in Wales (Source: [GovUk](#)).
- RCT maintains 1,290km of roads across the County Borough.
- Across the County Borough there are 11 Walking routes and 19 Shared Use routes that accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists. (Source: [RCT Active Travel Monitoring Report](#)).
- In 2018 transport was responsible for 17% of Welsh greenhouse gas emissions. 62% from private car use, 19% from Light Goods Vehicles and 16% from bus and Heavy Goods Vehicles. (Source: [Llwybr Newydd: Wales Transport Strategy](#)).
- 52,330 [Concessionary Travel Cards](#) are held by RCT residents:
  - 47,212 hold aged 60+ cards.
  - 3,361 hold Disabled cards.
  - 1,757 have been issued with Disabled plus Companion cards.
- 20,609 RCT residents have been issued with [Blue Badge Parking permits](#).

### Air quality, Emissions and Renewables

- There are currently 16 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) being monitored in RCT for breaches of Air Quality Objectives (AQO) (Source: [2020 Air Quality Progress Report](#)).
- 329 ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEV) registered in RCT in Q4 2020, 63.68% increase from 201 in Q4 2019. RCTs rank 11<sup>th</sup> out of 22 Local Authorities in Wales (Source: [Dept of Transport VEH0132a](#)).
- The latest estimates show that in 2018, 1,064.8 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide (CO<sup>2</sup>), the main greenhouse gas was emitted across RCT. This equates to 4.4 tonnes of CO<sup>2</sup> per resident <sup>2,1</sup>
- The Council generated 570,535 Mw/h of electricity through low-carbon or renewable technologies<sup>2</sup>, approximately enough to power 65 homes for 1 year.<sup>3</sup>

### Flooding

- 9,270 properties in RCT were considered to be at 'high-risk' of surface or river flooding, with a further 4,330 properties in the 'medium-risk' category. (Source: [Stats Wales](#)).
- RCT is one of four defined flood risk areas in Wales. 11.3% of the population of RCT is at risk from surface water flooding due to excess rainwater issues.
- There are over 700km of culverted watercourses across the County Borough. ([Internal Data source](#)).

### Parks & Green Spaces

- There are 10 Green Flag Awards for parks and open spaces in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

<sup>1</sup> [Gov.uk - UK Local Authority and Regional Carbon Dioxide Emissions](#)

<sup>2</sup> [StatsWales - Low Carbon Energy Generation by Local Authority](#)

<sup>3</sup> [OFGEM - Electricity Generation: Facts and Figures](#)

## Waste & Hygiene

- 372 Fixed Penalty Notices were issued for dog fouling and other PSPO offences.
- 3,146 recorded incidents of fly-tipping throughout RCT.
- RCT waste that cannot be recycled or reused equates to 0.21kg per RCT resident.
- We recycled 94,558 tonnes of waste 66.74% and sent 5,151 tonnes of waste to landfill in 2020/21.

## Looking Ahead.....

### Transport

- By 2030, the number of miles travelled on roads in Wales is expected to increase by at least 5.7% (1.02 billion miles) from the 2017 baseline. (Source: [Department for Transport – Road Traffic Forecasts 2018 RTF18](#)).
- By 2035 between 47% and 59% of all cars on the road will be electric (or possibly hydrogen fuel cell), compared to a 6.6% market share in 2020. (Source: [Energy Saving Trust](#)).

### Environment, Climate & Flooding

- Current trends suggest that compared to the 1981-2000 baseline, annual temperatures in Wales are expected to rise between approx. 1.2°C by the 2050s and between 1.3 and 2.3°C by the 2080s
  - summer rainfall is expected to decrease by approx. 15% by 2050s and between 18% and 26% by 2080s. Despite overall summer drying, projections suggest that when it does rain, the rainfall will be more intense.
  - winter rainfall is expected to increase by approx. 6% by 2050s and between 7% and 13% by 2080s (Source: [CCCRA3 Summary for Wales](#)).
- Flooding and coastal erosion are two of the biggest natural hazard risks affecting the safety and sustainability of Welsh communities. ([Internal Data Source](#)).

### Energy & Waste

- The Welsh Government has set a goal of achieving 70% renewable energy consumption by 2030. (Source: [Welsh Government – Energy Generation in Wales 2018- Pages 3 & 8](#)).
- The energy demand in Wales is predicted to rise between 14% and 68% by 2035, from 2014 baseline. (Source: [Welsh Government - Renewable energy targets: evidence – Page 7](#)).

## **Keeping RCT clean, sending as little waste as possible to landfill, meeting our recycling targets and reducing our carbon footprint.**

### **Measures we set out last year**

- We recycled more waste - 66.74% compared to 64.78% in 2021.
- There were nearly 3,200 fly-tips across RCT last year. Although the average time taken to clear the tips was marginally shorter than last year at 2.2 days, we didn't clear as many tips within our five-day target as some were more difficult than usual to get to. 12 cases of fly-tipping by RCT residents were heard in Merthyr Magistrates Court, with one individual receiving a fine of £2,000. There are also over 100 cases of residents fly-tipping or not paying fixed penalties for littering currently being considered for prosecution.

#### **Flooding and landfill**

Most waste created by floods is contaminated and cannot be recycled or reused. Over 5,000 tonnes of flood waste was sent to landfill as a result of the storms during 2020/21.

### **Among other things we**

- Continued our full waste and recycling collection and street cleaning, we also continued to tackle dog fouling and other littering.
- Extended the Public Spaces Protection Order to prevent dog fouling in the area in line with residents' views.
- opened the Community Recycling Centres (CRC) when it was safe to do so. We kept people informed of changes and safety measures in place through Social Media. To ensure that staff and visitors were safe and to meet the increased demand for recycling whilst people were in lockdown, we extended the opening hours and for a short time we opened two more CRCs. As a result, in 2020/21 the recycling across the CRCs increased by over 351 tonnes to 38,262.86.
- Increased our recycling target to 80% by 2025, which is higher than the Welsh Government has set for Councils in Wales.

### **In 2021-22 our plans include**

- Supporting business and social landlords to comply with new laws that mean Trade Waste must be sorted by type.
- Working towards our recycling goal of 80% by 2025.
- Continuing to tackle environmental crimes e.g. littering, dog fouling, fly tipping and illegal parking.
- Working with Cardiff Capital Region City Deal partners to develop sustainable transport options across the area including trialling Electric Vehicle Taxis and buses and installing Electric Vehicle charging points.

### **We will also show you our progress by...**

- Increasing the amount of waste we recycle.
- How far we have advanced the work to develop the Eco Park at Bryn Pica.
- The numbers of enviro crimes we have tackled and
- The level involvement of our residents in our campaigns.

## **Keeping the County Borough moving, including improvements to roads and pavements and public transport, whilst also improving air quality**

### **Measures we set out last year**

- We have seen improvements in our A, B and C roads. Although 4.6% of all our roads were reported as being in poor condition, this has fallen from 9.3% in 2014/15. You will see more about our [investment in road improvements](#) below.

### **Among other things we**

- continued to improve the condition of our existing roads and highways e.g. resurfacing 105 of our roads and repairing 3,315 potholes. We also repaired bridges and river walls, replaced footways and put in place new road safety measures.
- opened the [Mountain Ash Southern Cross Valley Link](#) road and progressed major schemes including the A4119 dualling at Ely Valley Road; dualling and an Active Travel bridge at Coed Ely roundabout; Cynon Valley Gateway North and, Llanharan By-Pass.
- continued to improve and develop Active Travel schemes so that people can get around the County Borough more easily on foot or by cycling. Schemes will link existing routes, trails and town centres as part of the Town Centre regeneration. We are also investigating whether new routes are possible. This is being funded by Welsh Government.
- invested over £990k in Flood Drainage and Flood Risk Management which included monitoring of culverts to help prevent floods in our communities. Our work includes
  - installing, upgrading or strengthening culverts in Cwmbach, Pentre, Fernhill, Mountain Ash, Rhydyfelin and Treherbert.
  - replacing an underground pipe, manhole system and creating new surface water channel and pond at [Park Lane Trecynon](#). This pond will also help increase the biodiversity in the area.
  - repairing river walls above the [Nant Clydach river, Ynysybwll](#) and [Blaen-Y-Cwm Road, Blaencwm](#).
  - repairing the retaining wall at [A4054 Cardiff Road in Treforest](#) along the River Taff.
  - improving the watercourse at [Granville Terrace, Mountain Ash](#).
  - improving drainage at [Pleasant Street](#), Pentre and building a new catchpit manhole within Pentre Park.
  - upgrading the network at [Kingcraft Street, Mountain Ash](#).
  - using natural ways to manage flood risk, e.g. Ponty Rain garden in [Mill Street, Pontypridd](#) using tree pits and rain garden to tackle surface water, and installing ‘Hydroplanters’<sup>4</sup> to collect rainwater and run off at [Canal Road, Cwmbach](#).
- focused on unlawful and dangerous parking as restrictions relaxed, including outside schools, next to pedestrian crossings and at bus stops. We used mobile cameras to record incidents and processed over 15,000 Penalty Charge Notices to legal time scales in RCT and 40,000 across seven Local Authorities as part of the [South Wales Parking Group](#) (SWPG).
- made sure that the changing passenger transport requirements particularly for schools and community transport were safely met and were communicated to residents and parents. We also worked with Transport for Wales and Stage coach to a pilot ‘[fflecsi](#)’ scheme which originally

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<sup>4</sup> A sustainable and aesthetically pleasing flood alleviation method of greenery-filled crates that collect rainfall and water run-off, which is filtered into an outflow pipe

allowed residents to request a pick-up near them for essential travel e.g. from home, work or shops, via an App or by phone rather than following the bus timetable. The service is continuing on the 152 bus route from Tonypany to Hendreforgan via a number of communities in between. Users of this service provided positive feedback.

### **In 2021-22 our plans include**

- Continuing to improve the condition of our roads and bridges.
- Completing flood schemes across the County Borough including at Pentre, Aberdare and Hirwaun.
- Continuing to improve monitoring of our key culverts and outlets so that we can alleviate flood risk.
- Working with Transport for Wales, Welsh Government, Cardiff Capital City Region to develop and put in place more and better public and active travel options.
- Putting in place new Electric Vehicle standards for RCT taxis.
- Helping RCT taxi drivers trial a free '[Try before you Buy](#)' scheme to test fully electric, wheelchair accessible taxis, with all costs funded by Welsh Government.

### **We will also show you our progress by...**

- Improvements in the condition of our roads.
- Providing information about Air Quality.
- Our completed flood schemes.
- What Taxi Drivers thought of the electric taxis they trialled.

### **Ensuring the County Borough is one of the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion and where residents feel safe**

#### **Among other things we**

- Continued to make help available for people of all ages misusing alcohol or other substances. Help was available via telephone, and with face-to-face appointments when needed. Some meetings were conducted virtually through 'Zoom' and in some cases, devices were funded by Welsh Government. Also, some offices have remained open for the Specialist Needle Exchange provision. Online self-help resources have also been made available and a weekly Cwm Taf Morgannwg Service User Involvement/Participation Group also continued over Zoom, supporting 65 people overall, with 15 people attending each session.
- Supported 1,497 people experiencing Domestic Violence, mostly by phone. In some cases, we have used 'safe' venues to meet face to face. More recently as circumstances allowed, face-to-face meetings have taken place.
- Introduced an '[Any Man Can...](#)' campaign to raise awareness of domestic violence against men and where they can get help.
- Experienced fewer incidents of anti-social behaviour as restrictions were in place but we dealt with more reported neighbourhood disputes as people spent more time at home.

- Posted regular information about scams, including Covid related scams on our website and Social Media, and we delivered Scam information leaflets in the food and support parcels we delivered to vulnerable people.
- Continued to help people avoid telephone scams by installing '[trueCall](#)' blocking units, we currently have 82 units in place. Information from RCT units is also helping in a South Wales wide project to identify patterns and scams that have increased during Covid restrictions as well as a UK Council on its investigation into insurance scams. *One of our trueCall Users told us "I'm so glad that I've got it, living alone these nuisance calls are such a worry".*

#### **Tackling Rogue Traders**

With the help of the South Police Wales Police and the courage of RCT residents we have contributed to a South Wales wide investigation and arrest of Rogue Traders who targeted older people who paid up to £4,500 for work that wasn't started or was of poor quality they when finished.

#### **In 2021-22 our plans include**

- Widening the reach of Substance Misuse Services so that we are able to contact more people that need our help within the community.
- Continuing to support vulnerable people at risk of becoming homelessness.
- Strengthening arrangements for licencing premises and taxis as well as town centre security to keep people safe.
- Asking our residents for their views about keeping 'No Alcohol Zones' in Pontypridd and Aberdare.
- Working with [Community Alcohol Partnerships](#) as part of a new Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP) in Aberdare.
- Putting in place a single point of contact to make it easier for people experiencing Domestic Abuse to seek help and support.
- Continuing to raise awareness of Hate Crime with residents across all communities, schools and colleges.
- Helping community groups to access Council land and buildings to meet their community needs through '[RCT Together](#)'.
- Helping residents to produce and share fresh produce through a Sustainable Food Network.

#### **We will show you our progress by...**

- Completing the changes to the Youth Offending Service.
- Increasing the number of people we are able to reach through our Substance Misuse Services.
- Telling you what residents thought about keeping 'No Alcohol Zones' in Pontypridd and Aberdare.
- Having a new Community Alcohol Partnership in place in Aberdare.
- The number of People experiencing Domestic Abuse using the new contact number to seek help and support.
- The number of people we have talked to, to raise awareness of Hate Crime across communities, schools and colleges and what they thought about what they learnt.
- The number of community groups access Council land and buildings to meet their community needs through 'RCT Together'.
- Helping residents to produce and share fresh produce through a Sustainable Food Network.

## Getting the best out of our parks by looking after and investing in our greenspaces

### Among other things we

- Completed a major refurbishment of Ynysangharad War Memorial Park Pontypridd including a new bowling green hedge, an improved and renewed main footpath and smaller paths, low energy lighting throughout the park and new a '[Changing Places](#)' Toilet so that people with a disability have space and equipment available to meet their needs with enough space for carers to help.
- Reopened Ponty Lido following the devastation caused by the flooding in 2020.
- Completed the upgraded play activities to provide more physical challenge for children of all abilities and progressed the improvements to Dare Valley Country Park including the Gravity Family Bike Park.
- Achieved 10 Green Flag awards from Keep Wales Tidy for well managed parks and green spaces.
- Helped to increase the variety of plants and animals and helped them to thrive by reducing grass cutting in some of our grass verges and land.
- Continued to invest in playgrounds sports pitches and parks' buildings. Throughout the year, Covid restrictions affected outdoor play areas, skate parks, multi-use games areas and courts. Our services were delivered as restrictions allowed.

### In 2021-22 our plans include

- Continuing to improvement the facilities available in Dare Valley Country Park and encouraging visitors to enjoy what the park has to offer through a new Country Park website.
- Investigating how peatbogs on Council land can be used to capture and store carbon so it doesn't go into the atmosphere and contribute to global warming.
- Encouraging nature to thrive by using more Council land to develop into wildflower meadows
- Launching a new Biodiversity Web site where we can also encourage residents to get more involved with nature and with community groups on local sites.
- Identifying places where trees can be planted or protected and can thrive, also be part of the Queen's Green Canopy to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee in 2022.

### We will show you our progress by...

- Setting out how we will start to restore and create peatbogs.
- The number of new wildflower sites in place.
- How residents are getting involved in nature and 'green' community projects.

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language	Globally Responsible
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

You can see more detail about how we will continue our work to make PLACES 'where people are proud to live, work and play' in our [2021-22 PLACES Plan](#).



## **PROSPERITY-Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper**

We put in place plans for PROSPERITY because we want to create opportunities for people to reach their potential through education and training and for businesses across the County Borough to flourish. We are continuing to invest in our schools, early years settings and also our Town Centres, bringing in more jobs and creating new homes, along with opportunities for Leisure and Social Activities. We believe that RCT has much to offer, and we want to make sure that we make best use of our work with partners to improve the availability of low carbon public and accessible transport, strengthen tourism and create new jobs, especially in the 'green' economy.

During 2020/21 much of the work to create opportunities for people of all ages and support businesses and communities to prosper was affected by the impact of Covid-19. Schools and businesses were faced with many unprecedented challenges.

Our focus in schools was to keep our children and young people, particularly those who were most vulnerable, safe, engaged and supported. Schools had to respond quickly to meet the challenges arising from the speed and frequency of new safe Covid arrangements and to introduce new assessment procedures due to the cancellation of exams. This included providing online classes, IT equipment, Teacher Assessments, access to MiFi and the means for over 8,500 learners to continue to receive a lunch they would have had for free in school. For our most vulnerable learners and the children of key workers we set up emergency child-care hubs so that they could be in a safe environment and, so far as possible, continue learning and where necessary we provided safe transport to get them there. They were also able to join activities during the summer holidays in schools and childcare settings and for older children outside of school through our Youth Service.

Our focus on local businesses was supporting those that were affected by the flooding, also helping Town Centres to adapt to the changes demanded by Covid restrictions to keep people safe. We also learned more about our local business community, with many businesses helping to support the Council and contributing to the fight against Covid-19 by changing their processes to produce sanitiser, Protective Equipment and signage. As well as helping to keep people and communities safe, it showed how our local businesses can respond quickly and effectively to changes in demands.

Although Covid 19 slowed some of our progress, we were able to progress other areas of work including the new schools and school buildings, housing and developments within our Town Centres, e.g. Llys Cadwyn and the YMCA in Pontypridd and Oxford Buildings in Mountain Ash, and we continued to offer a range of training and work experience opportunities for our young people and held our first virtual Careers Fair where over 1,600 people registered to attend.

Our focus on housing was in supporting people affected by or at risk of homelessness, and providing suitable, quality and affordable homes to meet residents' needs. At the start of the pandemic, there was a 76% increase in homelessness applications and a significant increase in people placed in emergency temporary accommodation. We continued to work with property owners and Welsh Government to bring empty properties back into use and worked closely with social landlords to provide more good quality affordable housing, including adapted and supported housing. We also created a social letting agency to support tenants and landlords in the private rented sector, especially people at risk of homelessness.



Our strong relationship with schools and partnerships with the Central South Consortium, Welsh Government and businesses have been key to the way that the Council has been able to respond to the challenges of the last year. We will continue to strengthen our relationships and partnerships so that together, we create the best possible future for our residents, communities, businesses and visitors.

We know that the work to help children, young people and businesses affected by the floods and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will continue for some time, but we remain committed to our ambitious programme of work.

The steps we are taking for PROSPERITY, by creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper are

- Investing in our town centres, bringing jobs and homes into our town centres to create vibrant, thriving places people wish to live, work and socialise.
- Delivering major regeneration and transportation schemes, maximising the impact of the new South Wales Metro, to create better places to live and work, whilst protecting and enhancing the County Borough.
- Increasing the number of quality homes available and affordable to provide greater housing choice for residents.
- Ensuring we have good schools so all children have access to a great education.
- Helping people into work and better paid employment.

## Latest available data tells us....

### Economy

- Latest data, 2019, shows the value of goods and services (GVA) produced in the County Borough was £4,187M, 4<sup>th</sup> highest in Wales (Source: [StatsWales](#)).
- At the end of 2020, the average house price in RCT was £120,000, the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest in Wales (Source: [Office for National Statistics](#)).
- Based on band D property rates, Council Tax in RCT was 5<sup>th</sup> highest in Wales for 2021-22. However, Council Tax increases have been the lowest in Wales over the last 4 years (Source: [StatsWales](#)).

### Employment

- Latest data, Dec 2020, 67.3% of RCT residents aged 16+ were in employment, the second lowest LA in Wales and 5.5 percentage points lower than the Wales average (72.8%) (Source: [NOMIS](#)).
- According to latest figures 2018, the Public Administration, Education and Health industry is the largest employer throughout RCT (31% of workers), followed by Wholesale, Retail and Hospitality (28%) and Production (15%) (Source: [StatsWales](#)).
- According to 2020 estimates, the average weekly earnings of people working in the Rhondda Cynon Taf area was £521.20, an increase of 50p per week on the previous year and still lower than the Wales average (£537.80) (Source: [StatsWales](#)).

### Education

- As of 2020, 9.3% of working age people in RCT had no qualifications, 1.7% higher than across Wales (7.6%). (Source: [NOMIS](#)).
- During 2019/20, there were 4,530 people employed within apprenticeship and trainee schemes in the RCT area. This was the second highest number in Wales, however it decreased by 14.2% compared to the previous year. Of these, 1.21% were from a BAME background, ranking 13<sup>th</sup> out of 22 Local Authorities. (Source: [StatsWales](#)).
- 19,675 people from RCT participated in further education during 2019/2020, a 32.9% decrease from the previous year (Source: [StatsWales](#)).

### Housing

- As of 2019, there were 105,773 households in RCT. This is an increase of 0.8% from the previous year and 6.5% over the last 10 years (Source: [StatsWales](#)).
- 240 empty properties were brought back into use in 2020/21. This was 34% more than the previous year (179).

## Looking Ahead....

### Economy

- The pay difference between the highest and lowest earners is likely to grow across the UK to 2030. The pay difference in Wales is lower than the rest of the UK and this is projected to continue to 2030. Pre Covid-19 data. (Source: [UKCES future of work evidence](#)).
- Based on predictions, the UK economy is set to be £55bn smaller by 2030 than it would have been without Brexit. In a worst-case scenario, households may be up to £1,700 worse off per year. Pre Covid-19 data. (Source: [Institute of Public Policy Research](#)).

### Employment & Skills

- The total number of people employed in Wales is expected to reach 1.466M by 2024, a 6.2% increase from the 1.380M employed in 2020. (Sources: [Working Futures 2014 – 2024](#) and [StatsWales](#)).
- From 2019 to 2024, Wales will see a decline in jobs in Engineering, Agriculture and Manufacturing. Jobs in Finance and Insurance, Information Technology and Health and Social work are set to increase (Source: [UKCES labour market projections for Wales 2014 – 2024](#)).

### Education

- The total number of pupils in Wales is set to increase 1.36% between 2018 and 2028, with the greatest increase predicted in the number of students over 16, 12.31%. (Source: [StatsWales](#)).
- The number of people in the Welsh workforce without a qualification is set to drop from 3% to 2% between 2019 and 2024, while 70% of the workforce in 2024 will have qualifications at A level/equivalent or above, up from 65% in 2019 (Source: [UKCES labour market projections for Wales 2014 – 2024](#)).

### Housing

- The number of households in RCT is projected to increase by 5.7% by 2028. RCT will also have one of the highest increases in Wales in the number of one person households, up 13.3%. (Source: [Local Authority household projections for Wales](#)).

## General Statement of Progress

In 2020 we said we would continue our work to create the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper. Overall, despite the challenging circumstances faced by our schools, staff and business we were able to make positive progress over the last year.

As part of our work towards our PROSPERITY priority, we will build on our experience of doing things differently, learning from what has worked and what we need to do better. We know that there is much to do help people and businesses to thrive and to make the most of opportunities we are helping to create in the future.

Our work within the PROSPERITY priority is overseen by Cabinet, relevant Scrutiny Committees and, where appropriate Partnership Boards including Public Services Board and we work as part of the Cardiff Capital Regional City Deal [to support regeneration and economic growth](#) in RCT and the wider region.

You can see more detail of our progress against what we set out to achieve in 2020/21 in our [PROSPERITY Performance Evaluation](#).

## **In 2020 we said that we would**

### **Invest in our town centres, bringing jobs and homes into our town centres to create vibrant, thriving places people wish to live, work and socialise.**

#### **Among other things we**

- Helped support social distancing in businesses in our eight main centres e.g. displaying information, providing posters for businesses, ensuring safe public areas and seating, providing information on business grant support available and encouraging people to join in community testing for Covid-19. We waived charges in our car parks in Aberdare and Pontypridd Town Centres for much of 2020 to encourage people to shop locally. We also changed the conditions for the payment of some grants available to business so that they were able to make changes to improve social distancing, including outdoor seating, awnings, canopies as well as improvements to courtyards and gardens.
- Supported 50 businesses with grants totalling £275,000 to help them adapt and diversify. Also 80 businesses were awarded grants worth £435,000 to help them make changes to improve social distancing, such as outdoor areas. We also processed in excess of 14,300 grants with a value of £76.9M for Non-Domestic Rates Relief, and anecdotally, we received positive feedback from businesses about the speed at which they received these grants.
- Continued work on the key Town Centre regeneration projects, including the new Transport Hub in Porth. We also completed the redevelopment of the Black Lion in Aberdare to provide living space on the first floor with flexibility to use the ground floor for commercial or additional living space.
- Started work to transform underused buildings in our Town Centres, including Mountain Ash Town Hall and Llwynypia Magistrates Court. Once complete they will be available for working and business development spaces.
- Put in place funding to demolish fire damaged buildings in Dunraven street, Tonypany, with the land to be used for new homes.
- Delivered the [award winning Llys Cadwyn development](#) in Pontypridd, providing office space, a Community Hub containing a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Library, gym, fitness/spin studio and a Riverside Walk and bridge linking to Ynysangharad War Memorial Park.

#### **Our plans for 2021-22 include**

- Continuing to support new and existing businesses to survive and thrive in our Town Centres.
- Finding ways to bring back into use, empty and disused sites in our Town Centres.
- Doing more to encourage visitors to RCT and promote attractions such as Zip World Tower, Gravity family bike park and the Rhondda and Abernant Tunnels projects.
- Putting in place more active travel routes so that people can reach Town Centres without using their cars and investigating possible new routes.

#### **We will also show you progress through...**

- % vacant retail premises in Porth, Pontypridd, Aberdare and Treorchy, and
- the average weekly number of visitors to Porth, Pontypridd, Aberdare and Treorchy

## **Deliver major regeneration and transportation schemes, maximising the impact of the new South Wales Metro, to create better places to live and work, whilst protecting and enhancing the County Borough**

### **Among other things we**

- Continued to work with contractors to deliver a 30,000 square foot business unit at Coed Ely and begin construction of 22 modern business units at Robertstown, Aberdare.
- Completed [Llys Cadwyn](#) in Pontypridd with office space for 1,000 people, a library and gym, a restaurant and two hospitality outlets, with 'green' features which can be used for heating, lighting and power. The development also has 6 charging points for electric cars, and pre-laid cables so more can be added in future. We also opened a new footbridge between Llys Cadwyn and Ynysangharad War Memorial Park.
- Reopened the footbridge to Ynysangharad War Memorial Park following repairs to the damage caused by Storm Dennis.
- Started to [demolish](#) the Bingo Hall and Angharad's nightclub, Pontypridd.
- Made progress on the Porth Transport Hub which will bring together rail and bus journeys making it easier for people to travel without using their cars, scheduled to open in 2022.
- Worked with neighbouring Councils across South Wales to launch a new [Valley's Regional Park website](#) (VRP) to raise the profile of the Welsh Valleys and bring together information about activities, events and attractions that visitors and tourists can enjoy, including ten sites that will act as gateways to the VRP.
- Continued our work with businesses and neighbouring councils to encourage visitors to Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Valleys. Progress was slower than we had planned as Covid restrictions forced us to close or limit visitor numbers. However, in [April 2021](#), we saw the opening of Zip World with its Phoenix zip wire, the fastest seated zipline in the world and the only Zip World attraction in South Wales. In April, plans were announced to re-open Lido Ponty in May, following refurbishment and repairs to the devastation caused by Storm Dennis.
- Saw the completed construction of the steel frame of the YMCA building in Pontypridd, with the next phase of work on the building on target and aiming for completion by the end of 2021.
- Successfully [bid for funding](#) to develop a cultural hub in Treorchy, building on the existing theatre and library.

### **Our plans for 2021-22 include**

- Continuing to develop our Town Centres in Mountain Ash, Tonypany and Porth that will increase employment, create homes and encourage shoppers.
- Continuing to progress the Council's new Local Development Plan, including talking to residents and communities about where we should develop and build new homes and commercial opportunities and where we need to protect our natural resources.
- Supporting Housing Development on former industrial and hospital sites at Beddau, Aberaman and Aberdare.
- Putting in place more car parking at Park and Rides in Porth, Treorchy and Llwynypia.
- Improving Wi-Fi availability across the County Borough including Pontypridd Town Centre.
- Continuing the development of Llanilid as part of wider South Wales Regeneration plans to bring life to the former open cast coal mining site, including new homes, leisure facilities as well as industrial and office space, a school and transport links.

- Promoting all that the County Borough has to offer in our landscape, greenspaces and heritage and talking to businesses, residents and visitors about how we can shape tourism for the future, bringing jobs and prosperity to the area.
- Creating energy for business and public transport by installing solar panels in the new Transport Hub in Porth and our Business Units in Tonyrefail, Trecynon and Aberdare.

### **We will also show you progress through...**

- The number of businesses start-ups and closures across the County Borough.
- The number of businesses and organisations supported through grant support programmes.
- The number of jobs created and safeguarded in businesses through grant support programmes.

### **Ensuring we have good schools so all children have access to a great education.**

#### **Among other things we**

- Put in place new ways to teach our pupils online. We provided over 5,500 devices to children to help them continue to study from home or provided printed work packs where this was more helpful to learners.
- Set up 25 emergency child-care hubs for the children of key workers and vulnerable children catering for both English and Welsh language learners.
- Supported schools and Pupil Referral Units to help pupils and vulnerable learners to continue to learn in English and Welsh speaking learning hubs, at school or at home, providing equipment where necessary.
- Put in place early intervention and support for learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties at four of our secondary schools and continued to work towards putting in place effective support for all learners with Additional Learning Needs between the ages of 0 and 25.
- Supported pupil's well-being and mental health, establishing practical ways to keep children and young people safe in schools and reduce the need for them to isolate.
- Continued to invest in our school buildings and facilities through 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools including
  - Opening a [new low-carbon primary school](#) building in Hirwaun in Autumn 2020.
  - Completing the first phase of work at Ffynnon Taf primary school.
  - Progressing plans to invest £56.6M to improve school facilities across greater Pontypridd, including a new 3-16 school on the site of Pontypridd High School, more effective sixth form provision and more Welsh medium education places. As part of this investment, we have also completed early preparations for a new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin and a new 3-16 school building, with specialist provision for pupils with Additional Learning Needs at the site of Hawthorn High school.
- Obtained planning permission for improvements at Cwmlai Primary school and Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun, with a total investment of £13.72M.
- Agreed £3.5M funding for a new extension at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg, Aberdar.
- Invested £5.78M in maintaining and making improvements in other schools e.g. refurbishing toilets, improving kitchens, replacing boilers, renewing roofs, installing IT and making it easier for children with mobility needs to get in and around school.

## Our plans for 2021 - 22 include

- Continuing to support schools to provide high quality teaching and learning so that students can achieve their potential and working with our regional partners in the Central South Consortium to support schools with the greatest need and where learners' progress has been most affected by the pandemic.
- Safely improving pupil attendance at all schools and providing support and encouragement to learners and their families to improve their levels of engagement in school life.
- Continuing to help schools to put in place ways to improve the emotional and mental well-being of learners including more school-based counselling for children and young people.
- Making sure that children with additional learning needs and children in our care get the best possible support in our schools.
- Supporting children to get the best possible start through delivering 5 projects to improve the quality and availability of Early Years provision in our schools and providing support to the child-care sector.
- Providing our secondary school learners with new and better opportunities to prepare for work, training or further education through good career advice and guidance.
- Improving our school buildings through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme to provide high quality learning facilities and reduce our impact on the environment, and involving parents, carers and communities in developing our plans for the future. Our programme includes
  - consulting with residents about a new Welsh Medium School for YGG Llyn y Forwen, Ferndale,
  - progressing school projects in the Pontypridd area including expanded 6<sup>th</sup> form and new buildings at Bryncelynog Comprehensive, a new 3-16 school at Hawthorn, a new 3-16 school at Pontypridd and a new Welsh Medium primary school,
  - starting to plan and prepare for three new school projects in Penygawsi Primary School in Llantrisant, Llanilltud Faerdref Primary School in Pontypridd and Pontyclun Primary School,
  - progressing the new buildings at Ffynnon Taf Primary school, including a new school block which will be heated by the Taff's Well Thermal Spring Heat Network, providing low carbon heating to the school.

You can see more about our 21 Century Schools progress and plans on [our website](#) where you will also find more information about improvements [within other schools](#).

- Encouraging our learners to get involved in changes that will help reduce the impact of climate change, e.g. by providing more vegetarian and vegan school meal options, reducing single use plastics in our schools and supporting school eco-committees to promote action on climate change.

## We will also show you progress through...

- Our 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools building and improvement programme.
- Information about pupil attendance in all our schools.



## **Increase the number of quality homes available and affordable to provide greater housing choice for residents**

### **Among other things we**

- Prioritised housing need in response to Covid-19 including homelessness, temporary accommodation and landlord support and developing an integrated Homelessness Recovery Plan.
- Put in place a social letting agency to rent private properties on behalf of landlords to provide affordable housing for people in need and at risk of homelessness.
- Worked with Registered Social Landlords to deliver 164 quality affordable homes across RCT through the Social Housing Grant. Housing types were chosen to meet the needs of our residents, and included accessible, adapted and specialist accommodation for people with specific needs, including supported accommodation for people with learning disabilities and adapted bungalows for people whose health is affected by weight. All the affordable homes were delivered by South Wales contractors, with 50% by contractors in RCT.

### **Our plans for 2021- 22 include**

- Working with Housing Associations and other partners to put in place more low carbon housing.
- Looking at ways to fund the work to make existing homes low carbon.
- Finding ways to help new housing create its own energy.
- Bringing more empty properties across the County Borough back into use.

### **We will also show you progress through...**

- The number of interventions to bring empty properties back into use, and how many properties are successfully brought back into use.
- The number of new homes delivered by Registered social landlords.

## **Help people into work and better paid employment.**

### **Among other things we**

- Were unable to do as much as we planned but we continued to support people to reach their potential through projects that best meet their needs. e.g.
  - Our support to people in our Employment Pathway programme, including providing access to ICT by lending Chrome books for those people without access to digital equipment.
  - Putting in place the UK [Government's KickStart](#) scheme to create jobs for young people between 16 and 24 years old.
  - We supported over 1,350 people with mentoring support, training or gaining qualifications. 545 people successfully gained employment following our support.
- Continued to help young people leaving our care by providing them with the chance to gain paid work experience with the Council. We have also continued to provide support to other young people in our care and those who are leaving, to identify training and work opportunities. For



young people with learning difficulties or disabilities the ‘Gateway to Change’ programme provides young people with the chance to gain work experience within the Council as part of their college course at Coleg y Cymoedd.

- Recruited 33 Apprentices, and 26 Graduates across the Council’s services, our highest ever intake, providing quality training and work experience for local young people.
- Hosted our first [virtual Careers Fair](#) featuring 32 national and local employers with over 500 jobs and training opportunities on offer.

You can find more information about our Employment and Education programmes on our [website](#).

**Our plans for 2021- 22 include**

- Continuing to help residents to develop the skills and confidence they need for work or training.
- Supporting employers to provide work experience and job opportunities through the Government’s [KickStart](#) programme
- Providing work experience placements across the Council’s services for people who are leaving our care, are unemployed or have a learning disability.
- Holding two virtual Careers fairs that will help employers to reach residents looking for opportunities to work and train.

**We will also show you progress through...**

- The number of people on our Employment Support programmes.
- The number of people finding work from our Employment Support programmes.
- The number of ‘KickStart’ opportunities offered within the Council and across the County Borough.
- % of school leavers not in Education, Employment or Training.

<b>Prosperous</b>	<b>Resilient</b>	<b>Healthier</b>	<b>More Equal</b>	<b>Cohesive Communities</b>	<b>Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language</b>	<b>Globally Responsible</b>
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

You can see more detail about how we will continue our work to support **PROSPERITY** by ‘creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential’ in our [2021-22 PROSPERITY Plan](#).

## Making the best use of our budget – Living within our means

Rhondda Cynon Taf, like the wider public sector, has experienced a prolonged period of real term reductions in funding for a number of years and more recently has faced the unprecedented challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, an event that eclipses anything we have seen in recent decades.

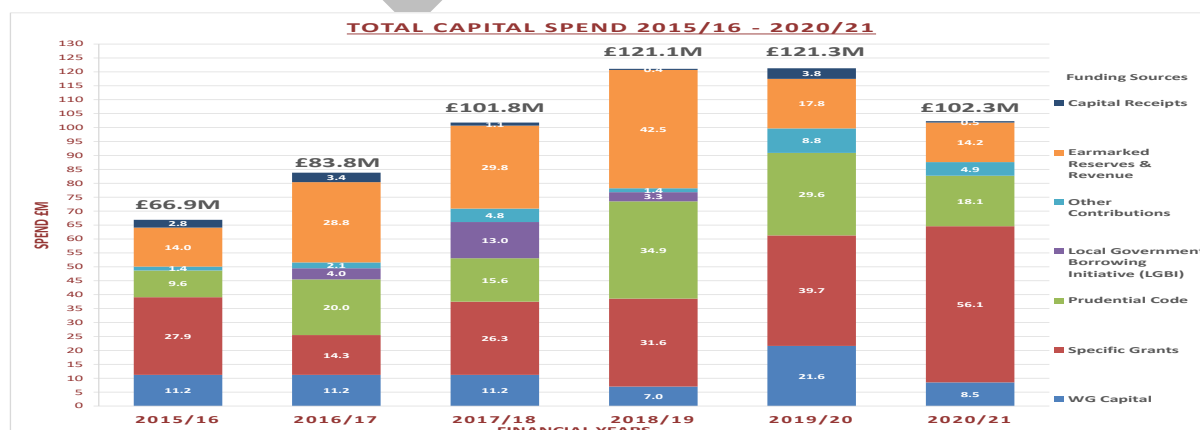
Against this backdrop, the Council’s robust approach to financial management and planning has supported the continued delivery of a range of important services to residents and businesses, and maintained the financial health and stability of the Council.

### Financial Performance - 2020/21

The Council’s year-end revenue budget position was a £0.204Million overspend against a total budget of £508Million, with key budget pressures particularly across Adult Social Care Services and Children’s Services. This position also took account of specific financial assistance, amounting to £49Million, claimed via the Welsh Government’s Covid Hardship Fund that provided support to all local authorities in Wales to meet the additional costs and income losses incurred as a direct result of the pandemic, for example, additional costs incurred in respect of housing / homelessness, free school meal payments, Adult Social Services, staff cover due to absence / shielding and increased demand for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, and income losses where there was a need to temporarily suspend or reduce services such as Leisure Centres and the provision of school meals.

Capital Programme investment for the year totalled £102Million, supported via Council resources and Welsh Government funding, and represented an ambitious programme of significant investment in line with Corporate Plan priorities. This investment is making visible improvements across the County Borough and includes a continued focus on: town centre regeneration and businesses; modernising accommodation options for older people via an on-going programme of new Extra Care facilities; new schools and the modernisation of existing schools; highways, bridge and footbridge improvements; flood alleviation works; and improvements to parks and play areas.

Importantly, the Council has been able to sustain significant levels of capital investment over a number of years through an approach that reviews and re-prioritises its own resources in a planned way, this enabling additional investment of £123Million over and above normal capital programme allocations since 2015, as set out below.



The Council has a legal requirement to compile a Statement of Accounts on an annual basis that sets out its financial position each year and this being subject to an independent external audit. For the 2020/21 financial year, the external audit has been completed with the auditor issuing an unqualified opinion (i.e. a clean bill of health), providing assurance on the robustness of the Council's arrangements and its general financial standing.

### 2021/22 and Looking Ahead

The Council approved a balanced revenue budget for 2021/22 on [10th March 2021](#) that took account of changing service demand, the emerging on-going impact of Covid-19 and inflationary pressures; ensured our schools were fully funded; and the continuation of additional investment in priority areas such as support to businesses, climate change and carbon reduction, staff well-being, public health and protection services and flood prevention support.

The 2021/22 revenue budget represents an increase in spending of £19.1Million compared to the previous year and is funded from a +3.8% increase in the money the Council receives from its main funding source, Welsh Government; the delivery of significant efficiency savings that will not impact on frontline services (£4.6Million); and the continuation of a responsible approach to setting the level of Council Tax, at +2.65%, the lowest increase across Wales for the fourth consecutive year.

Looking ahead, the Council has continued to take a medium term approach to service and financial planning, and published updated Medium Term Financial Plans on [13th October 2020](#) and [20th July 2021](#). The latest update forecasts the continuation of a very challenging environment, with the need to deliver significant budget savings over the next 3 years to meet rising demand for services, particularly social care services, and specific inflationary pressures, and also supporting the on-going and potential longer-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on our communities.

As part of our medium term approach to service and financial planning, a programme of work is on-going to identify budget saving options and encompasses: maximisation of efficiency saving opportunities including review of workforce requirements and resources; delivery of our Social Services Transformation Programme (including our significant commitment and investment in the provision of Extra Care facilities); review of our base budget requirements at both a service level and an authority wide level including our built assets; maximisation of opportunities to invest for the long term and collaboration with others; and a focus on the principles of Digitalisation, Commercialism, Early Intervention and Prevention, Independence and being an Efficient and Effective Organisation.

The Council is also a member of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, playing a central role in delivering an exciting and ambitious long-term plan to improve the economy of South East Wales.

## A Fair and Equal County Borough

We want everyone in the County Borough no matter where they live or their background, to have a fair chance in life and to make Rhondda Cynon Taf a fair and equal place to live and work. We recognise and respect differences and adapt what we do so that everyone can benefit.

We value all our staff and their differences and around 79% of our staff live in RCT. To make sure that our staff value and respect the differences in people in our communities as part of their jobs, we provide training and raise awareness of the wide-ranging issues that affect our residents.

<p><b>RCT Population (<a href="#">June 2020</a>)</b></p> <p>Total - 241,873  Males - 118,518 (49%)  Females - 123,355 (51%)</p>	<p><b>RCT staff data (March 2021)</b></p> <p>Over 79% of employees live in the Council area  Total - 10,790  Male - 25.5%  Female - 74.5%</p>																					
<p><b>Age range</b></p> <p>0-15 - 44,975 - (18.56%)  16-64 - 149,661 - (62.11%)  65+ - 46,628 - (19.33%)</p> <p>Source: <a href="#">Stats Wales June 2020</a> population estimates</p> <p><b>Ethnicity</b></p> <p>3.6% of RCT residents are Black Asian and Minority Ethnic. <i>Because of the small number of people surveyed, this might not be a true reflection.</i></p> <p>Source: <a href="#">Stats Wales June 2020</a>.</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age Group</th> <th>Total</th> <th>% of Workforce</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>16-24</td> <td>746</td> <td>6.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25-34</td> <td>2,038</td> <td>18.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>35-44</td> <td>2,597</td> <td>23.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>45-54</td> <td>3,140</td> <td>28.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>55-64</td> <td>2,157</td> <td>19.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>65+</td> <td>292</td> <td>2.7%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>More detailed information about the workforce can be found in the annual equalities <a href="#">monitoring report</a> to Cabinet 19 March 2019.</i></p>	Age Group	Total	% of Workforce	16-24	746	6.8%	25-34	2,038	18.6%	35-44	2,597	23.7%	45-54	3,140	28.6%	55-64	2,157	19.7%	65+	292	2.7%
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<p>18% of all Lower Super Output Areas, within RCT are amongst the 10% most deprived in Wales, while 45% are ranked amongst the 30% most <a href="#">deprived</a>.</p> <p><i>A Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) is a small geographical area of population of approx. 1,500 people. There are 154 LSOAs in RCT and 1,909 in Wales. Two of the ten most deprived areas in Wales are in Rhondda Cynon Taf, i.e., Tylorstown 1 and Penrhiwceiber 1. (Source: <a href="#">WIMD 2019</a>).</i></p>																						
<p><b><a href="#">The Thriving Places Index Wales for Equalities 2020</a></b> measures inequalities in Health, Income and Employment. The 2020 data gives RCT a rating of 4.43 out of a possible score of 10. The measure covers many different services and different providers at local, regional, national and international levels and the score for RCT has fallen from 5.26 since it was introduced in 2018.</p>																						

Before the pandemic, we were continuing to make good progress towards a fair and equal RCT with reasonable adjustments routinely made for our residents and staff across all our services. We can point to many positive examples of this throughout this report as well as in our Annual Equality Report which was presented to Cabinet in [March 2021](#) and which set out our work in 2019/20. These include

- achieving the Silver Insport Award [Valleys Gymnastics Academy earns Silver Insport Award for inclusion \(welshgymnastics.org\)](#) from [Disability Sport Wales](#) demonstrating inclusive sport and physical activity has become commonplace in the Sport RCT Team,
- continuing to offer learning opportunities to people with learning disabilities,
- offering a sensory line which promotes a dedicated 'text phone' for deaf customers and those hard of hearing,
- putting in place strategies to improve inclusion and well-being to support learners in under-represented groups including LGBTQ+, Young People who are not in education, employment or training and ethnic minorities including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, and pupils who face socio-economic disadvantage,
- designating 24/7 free parking spaces in our paid car parks for disabled users, 7% of the total spaces available which exceeds the number recommended in the [British Parking Association](#) guidance,
- making our crematories more accessible including toilet facilities, accessible ramps and doorways and hearing loop availability within the chapels,
- supporting residents in need of interpretation and translation. This included 313 bookings across 20 languages and British Sign Language. The five most requested languages being Portuguese, Mandarin, BSL, Arabic and Turkish.

During 2020/21 the impact of Covid-19 on our residents and communities worsened many existing inequalities, making life for those who are vulnerable even more challenging. Throughout this report, you will see many ways in which we and our partners supported our residents including

- offering, organising and delivering food packages to those who were highly vulnerable and at risk of infection, as well as supporting food banks for those in need,
- changing the way we supported families of children who were entitled to free school meals so that they were able to continue to benefit from this,
- providing access to IT equipment and 'MiFi' so that pupils could access learning at home,
- reinstating the 'At Home' library service so that our vulnerable residents got their books delivered safely to their door,
- providing residents, particularly those who are elderly or disabled, with information to support them to safely resume their day-to-day life as they emerge from lock down.

An important piece of our work over the last year has been to prepare to meet a new duty that the Welsh Government has put in place for all public bodies in Wales which will contribute to a more Equal Wales. The aim of this new duty, referred to as the 'socio economic' duty is to deliver better outcomes for those people that live in less favourable social and economic circumstances than others living in the same society. In other words, we should take account of the needs of people who are less well off than others in society. The duty means that when we make decisions, we need to understand how people will be affected so that their needs can be considered. The duty is set out in [A More Equal Wales – The Socio-economic Duty Equality Act 2010](#). You can find more information below.

We have also indicated our support for a call for the Welsh Government to implement a Universal Basic Income (UBI) trial in Wales and to lobby the UK Government for funding to extend this across Wales. Universal Basic Income would see everyone being paid a fixed sum by the Government to cover basic costs, regardless of whether they are rich or poor, or working or unemployed. Following a presentation from the UBI Lab Wales Network in [February 2021](#), we have committed to work with the Network to develop a pilot for the County Borough, subject to UK or Welsh Government funding.

As well supporting our residents, during 2020/21 we continued to work behind the scenes to deliver the things that would make a difference to the lives of people and communities, particularly as we emerge from lock down. In our [Strategic Equality Plan for 2019-22](#) we said we would focus on the five areas that our residents told us were most important to them to help to achieve a fairer Rhondda Cynon Taf.

1. Better understand the needs of our communities and the barriers they face to thrive.
2. Reduce inequalities that exist within our communities.
3. Promote safe communities.
4. Reduce the gender pay gap within the Council.
5. Create an inclusive workforce within the Council that represents the differences in our communities

Here is some of the progress we have made over the last year and our plans for 2021/22

**We said we aim to better understand the needs of our communities and the barriers they face to thrive. Among other things...**

As a result of our work with our partners, representative community groups and volunteers, over the last year, we have strengthened our relationships and learned more about the needs of communities and the barriers they face. These barriers include loneliness and isolation as well as getting into buildings, using technology, language and availability of transport.

**Our Plans for 2021-22 include**

- Continuing to engage with residents and community groups throughout RCT so that we can learn more about community needs and the barriers people face. We will use our libraries, neighbourhood networks, community hubs and organised meetings to meet residents and groups. We will also use the findings from the '[RCT Together](#)' survey about what people would like to see in their community, other '[Let's Talk](#)' conversations and other sources of community information including Social Media.
- Continuing to make our services more accessible to our residents and visitors including by the language and technology we use and the ways we communicate.
- Continuing the improvements to the Council's web site so that it can be easily used by as many people as possible and is better than the [Government's Accessibility Standards](#).
- Working within communities to improve the digital skills of our residents so that more people can get involved with the digital world.
- Learning from the lessons of the pandemic to strengthen the way we collect information about our staff in the first instance and so improve our knowledge of Rhondda Cynon Taf so we can better focus future support and services.

**We said we aim to reduce inequalities that exist within our communities.**

**Among other things...**

We continued to look at how our services can better support people to reach their potential e.g. in education, housing and employment. We also worked with many established networks across the County Borough to help people to reduce the inequalities they experience. We were unable to use 'virtual' ways to meet with the Disability Forum instead of our regular meetings, but we kept in regular telephone contact with members and have been continuing to discuss how service can be improved to better meet their needs.



Our work to reduce inequalities also included

- Reviewing the Council's recruitment and selection processes to increase the diversity of applicants.
- Recommending that the Council commits to increasing the number of adapted and accessible properties being built across the County Borough.
- Putting in place the Develop, Invest and Grow project to improve well-being, and equality and diversity outcomes in over 100 Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- Providing information through a variety of accessible formats that best meet different needs, with a focus on the information we provide for people in the Deaf community.
- Developing information about LGBT+ for teachers in our school so that they are more confident to support and teach pupils on these specific topics.
- Setting up an LGBT+ working group to improve support to children and young people children who access Council services or attend any of our Schools.
- Providing information to managers and Councillors to raise their awareness of what is expected of them to meet the new 'socio economic' duty. We have also changed the way that information is provided in Council reports so that Councillors have the information they need to make more informed decisions so that more people in communities can enjoy a long healthy and successful life. The Welsh Government has prepared a short video about the Socio-Economic Duty which you can find on its [website](#).

#### **Our Plans for 2021-22 include**

- Improving accessibility to Council services, particularly for deaf and disabled people.
- Developing a Race Equality Action Plan that will focus on tackling racialised inequalities in the County Borough.
- Working within our schools to improve resources and awareness of anti-racism materials.
- Working towards improving opportunities for all people to access political life.
- Putting in place an equalities challenge for key Council decisions.
- Developing employment support through Communities for Work that can be offered online as well as face to face.
- Ensuring that well-being factors for young people and their families are central within our service delivery.
- Committing to RCT becoming a Disability Smart Organisation as defined by the [Business Disability Forum \(BDF\)](#). This will also help the Council to be [Disability Confident](#) and help services across the Council to make the most of the talents that disabled people can bring to the work place and improve the life opportunities and experiences of disabled people in employment, economic growth, and society more widely.

#### **We said we aim to promote safe communities. Among other things...**

- We continued to support people experiencing domestic abuse as safely as possible within Covid guidelines.
- We continued to work with South Wales Police, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and other partners to raise awareness of Hate Crime, telling people how to report it and where to get support by
  - talking to people in town centres.
  - releasing 5 short videos across Social media and other outlets on [Race](#), [Disability](#), [Gender Identity](#), [Sexual Orientation](#) and [Religion](#).
  - appearing on local radio station [GTFM](#).

- safely attending a local primary school as part of its Year 6 Citizenship Education Programme.
- Provided support and reassurance to a shopkeeper experiencing racial abuse.
- Developed positive relationships with the Beddau Gypsy Community and Muslim Community at Aberdare Mosque, providing information about how to report Hate Crime and encouraging them to do so.
- Attended the Older Persons Advisory Group to provide information and assurance following their concerns about increasing community tensions with younger people during lock down.
- Supported 9 Syrian families as part of the Welsh Government's settlement programme.

#### **Our Plans for 2021-22 include**

- Continuing to develop teachers' knowledge and understanding so that they can better support LGBT+ and minority ethnic learners.
- Continuing to raise awareness of Hate Crime in our schools, colleges and communities.
- Working with Women's Aid to strengthen our response and support for people experiencing Domestic Violence.
- Continuing to work with schools to support positive emotional and mental health and well-being in learners.
- Working with South Wales Police to [strengthen the ways](#) we keep woman and girls safe in RCT.

#### **We said we aim to reduce the gender pay gap within the Council. Among other things year...**

We continued to monitor the workforce data and have reported that the Gender Pay gap in the Council has reduced for the third year running, see our [annual Equality Report 2019/20](#).

#### **Our Plans for 2021-22 include**

- Developing a new Women in Leadership programme which will be in place in 2021-22.
- Improving our support for pregnant staff and those on maternity leave as part of the national '[Working Forward](#)' pledge to make the workplace the best it can be for pregnant women and new parents.
- Re starting our annual Performance Review discussions as part of our staff development arrangements.

#### **We said we aim to create an inclusive workforce within the Council that represents the differences in our communities. Among other things**

- We continued to meet our responsibilities under the '[Disability Confident](#)' Scheme so that as an employer we can make most of the talents disabled people can bring, including providing '[Read&Write](#)' computer software to support dyslexic and neurodiverse colleagues.
- We continued to focus on Mental Health by providing information and direct support to help staff to look after their mental health and well-being during the pandemic and to talk about their mental health without judgement.
- We retained our Stonewall top 100 ranking as part of which we have also been able to offer free training courses to our schools to support LGBT+ pupils with mental health and other specific challenges and issues they might face.
- We strengthened our focus on Race Equality by
  - taking positive action to appoint a member of staff who is helping to challenge our thinking and our work,



- putting in place a staff network for Black Asian and Minority Ethnic people ‘Spotlight’ which is helping us to understand the lived experience of being a black member of staff and resident in a community,
- commissioning research project to look at the experience of black pupils in our secondary schools.
- We [showed our support](#) to a Zero-tolerance approach to racism by signing the [Zero Racism Wales](#) pledge.
- We raised awareness of national and international awareness days with articles, activities or events for
  - International Day of Persons with Disabilities
  - World Menopause Day
  - Men’s Mental Health Month
  - Time to Talk Day
  - International Women’s Day
  - Black History Month
  - Black Lives Matter
  - LGBT+ History Month
  - Lesbian Visibility Day
  - Holocaust Memorial Day
- We have also supported RCT Staff Networks
  - ‘Perthyn’ our LGBT+ network
  - Allies network
  - Disability and Staff Carers network
  - ‘Spotlight’ our new Race Equality Network
  - We have led a Regional Network ‘Proud Councils’ promoting and achieving an inclusive workplace and community for all LGBT+ people across South Wales based Councils.

**Our Plans for 2021-22 include**

- Continuing to raise profile of the national and international awareness activities and events.
- Working with Trades Unions to
  - raise staff awareness of Sexual Harassment in the workplace,
  - develop further opportunities for staff training through the [Welsh Union Learning Fund \(WULF\)](#).
- Committing to the [Race at Work Charter](#), launched by Business in the Community, which aims to tackle “ethnic disparities in the workplace”.
- Developing a Race Equality Action Plan to demonstrate our Zero tolerance to racism.
- Putting in place an accessibility steering group. This group has members from various areas across the Council and will advise on ongoing accessibility work and improvements. We are also working on a proposal for Council service areas to become an Autism Aware organisation.

**We are also continuing to strengthen our understanding of the needs of our Armed Forces Veterans,** and supporting the local Armed Forces community, including serving and ex-Military personnel and their families, through our continued commitment to the [Armed Forces Covenant](#).

Our work includes

**Supporting Service Children in Education:**

by working with our partners in the Armed Forces and [Supporting Service Children in Wales](#) (SSCE Cymru) we are learning more about ‘Service Children’ in schools across RCT. We found that there

were 114 pupils that are defined as 'Service children' across 48 schools. As a result of this, in April 2021, we were awarded £15,500 to improve support for these children during the 2020/21 academic year. This support will include

- Little Troopers resources: Primary Resource Packs and Well-being packs which will be delivered across the summer term in schools attended by primary aged Service children. It also includes lesson plans and materials for teachers to use within each setting which explores topics such as separation, deployment, house moves as well as themes of belonging, identity and mindfulness.
- Forces Fitness workshops: which will be delivered in secondary and all through-schools. The focus of these workshops will be on health, well-being and resilience building.

#### **Continuing the Veteran Advice Service:**

meeting housing needs, helping to meet Social Care needs, supporting veterans through the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund. This will enable us to continue to provide dedicated advice and support to the Armed Forces community. Since launching the service in 2019, we have received over 300 direct referrals (to April 2021) and we have been able to help veterans in many ways including with benefit claims, financial issues and getting into employment.

#### **Supporting Veteran Groups:**

by continuing to build upon relationships with the Armed Forces community. During the pandemic we set up weekly virtual Zoom meetings for Valley Veterans and Cynon Valley Veterans Coffee mornings.

#### **Armed Forces Covenant Training and Awareness:**

by launching virtual Armed Forces Covenant training to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC). The training is available to all Council staff and information about the AFC is included as part of the Council's induction arrangements for all new staff. The training is also free to organisations and businesses across RCT and can be tailored to meet their business needs and requirements. After delivering an awareness session to the Mid Rhondda Women's Institute about the AFC, we received positive feedback and importantly, we were able to identify more veterans in that area.

#### **Veterans Connected project:**

In March 2021 we were awarded £18,900 by the Armed Forces Covenant [Positive Pathways](#) Programme which helps to support the mental health and well-being of ex-forces. The funding will help us to buy electronic devices and make them available to Veterans for hire as part of our new 'Veterans Connected' project. The 'Veterans Connected' project aims to help improve Veterans' well-being by helping them to stay in touch with family and friends using digital technology. We will be working in partnership with four neighbouring Councils to deliver this project.

#### **Our plans for 2021-22 include**

Continuing to support armed forces personnel and veterans across Rhondda Cynon Taf by

- Holding conversations with people and communities across RCT to see if they are aware of the support that is available to our Armed Forces and Veterans.
- Encouraging more Veterans to get involved in our 'virtual' coffee mornings.
- Continuing to provide electronic equipment for hire to help reduce social isolation as part of the 'Veterans Connected' project.

- Raising Awareness about the range of services available to Armed Forces Veterans through social media and face to face events when it is safe to do so.
- Delivering Little Troopers Well-being packs across the summer term in schools attended by primary aged Service children. Packs also include lesson plans and materials for teachers to use.

For further information about our work to support the Armed Forces community email [Armedforces@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:Armedforces@rctcbc.gov.uk)

We cannot describe all the work that the Council is doing to make RCT a fair and equal County Borough in this report, but you will find more detailed information about our work in our most recent annual [Equalities Report](#) and by following our Social Media.

Our work to deliver our plans helps us to show how we are contributing to a [‘More Equal’](#) Wales - *a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances*. But it also seeks to support all the Well-being goals including a Wales of ‘Cohesive Communities’ and a ‘Prosperous’ Wales.

**Contributing to an RCT and Wales that is**

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language	Globally Responsible
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Welsh Language - delivering services in the language of your choice

**We are committed to creating an environment which encourages residents to use Welsh when communicating with the Council and supports staff to use Welsh in the workplace. Despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our speed of progress, we continue to make good headway in delivering services to you in the language of your choice and playing our part in helping Wales achieve One million Welsh speakers by 2050.**

- The 2011 Census tells us there are 27,779 Welsh speakers in RCT, 12.3% of the population. More recent data from [ONS Annual population survey](#) in December 2020, suggests this has increased to 46,100, 20% of the population. However, the ONS survey involved fewer people so it might not be a true reflection.
- The greatest proportion of Welsh speakers are under 25 years old (Source: [2011 census](#))
- RCT continues to have the highest % of pupils taught Welsh as a first language from within the 5 Councils covered by the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service (18.8%).
- The number of 7-year-olds being taught through the medium of Welsh has increased slightly, 534 in 2019/20, 18 more than in 2018/19.
- In 2019 the Council committed to a number of projects to increase school capacity, including a new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin and investment at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar and Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun, which will provide a further 690 Welsh medium education places by 2022.

During 2020–2021 we provided Welsh language training to 212 staff, with 144 undertaking Level 1 training and an additional 68 benefitting from Levels 2 & 3. All training was carried out virtually. The number of Welsh speakers on our staff continues to increase. In March 2021 there were 622 staff who self-identified as fluent Welsh speakers, 53 more than in 2019/20.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, we ensured as far as possible, all information for residents has been available bilingually at the point of issue, and we have continued to look at where we can do better and actively address any problems. Residents were able to access Welsh language services throughout the pandemic, including accessing Welsh medium provision at school hubs and receiving services such as welfare phone calls in their language of choice. We have also continued with our longer-term plans to support and develop use of the Welsh language, although the impact of the pandemic on our frontline services has meant progress in some areas has been slower than planned. We remain committed to making it easier for all residents and businesses to contact and do business with the Council in the language of their choice.

At the census in 2011, the number of Welsh speakers in our communities was 12.3% of our population, lower than the Wales average at 19%. As a result, the number of local people applying for jobs in the Council who are able to speak Welsh is also relatively low, as the majority of Welsh speakers in RCT are not of working age. This means we need to continue to support and encourage our existing staff to use and improve their Welsh skills at work and encourage our residents to engage with us in Welsh.

We have a dedicated Welsh language tutor who continues to support our staff with training directly related to their job role so they can better respond to resident's needs and tutored 212 members of staff during 2020/21 via remote platforms like Microsoft Teams. We also continued to work in

partnership with the [Welsh Government's Cymraeg Gwaith \(Work Welsh\) project](#), with 99 staff completing online courses.

Another important part of encouraging Welsh language use and increasing the number of Welsh speakers is through Welsh Medium Education, and we continued our work to increase the availability of school places across the County Borough and encouraged parents to consider it for their children. We continue to deliver a number of projects to increase capacity in our Welsh medium schools and early years settings, including expanding Dolau primary school and increasing the capacity at Penderyn primary school to be a Welsh medium only school. Further detail can be found in the [Welsh in Education Strategic Plan annual update](#).

Rhondda Cynon Taf will [host the Royal National Eisteddfod](#) in 2024. Originally scheduled for 2022, this event is an exciting opportunity to further boost the use of the Welsh language in our communities. This event will also contribute to helping the Council to meet the national Well-being goal of a 'Wales of vibrant culture and Welsh language', a 'Prosperous Wales' as well as other national Well-being goals. We are engaging with the National Eisteddfod team and preliminary work is underway, which over time will involve local communities, schools and organisations.

As well as promoting the use of the Welsh language, the Council also needs to follow [Welsh language laws](#) and apply [national Welsh Language Standards](#), making sure that we:

- treat the Welsh language the same as the English language, and
- offer people the opportunity to receive their services from us, as well as from those funded by us, in Welsh.

The Welsh Language Standards apply to all parts of the Council's work, including to Council meetings, where text translation and simultaneous translation support is available to Members and senior officers, support which continued during virtual meeting arrangements introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A national [Welsh Language Commissioner](#) is responsible for making sure that the Welsh Language Measure and the Standards are being implemented across Wales. We [report](#) our plans and progress to the Commissioner every year. We also have our own arrangements in place to check that we are making progress. We weren't able to do as much as we planned while services were focused on the dealing with the pandemic, but we reviewed our recruitment processes to see what difference they made to the Welsh language skills across the Council. We found that there is more we can do, and we are currently reviewing our procedures to have a positive impact on the Welsh language, specifically improving capacity in some key frontline services.

If we do not properly implement the Welsh Language Standards, we could receive a penalty of up to £5,000 for each 'breach'. In 2020/21, 40 complaints were received, or still under investigation, about how the Council is treating the Welsh language, which is more than the previous year (2019/20, 23 complaints). This increase is partly due to delays in closing some complaints as the Welsh Language commissioner paused investigations during initial stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the majority of cases, complaints were upheld by the Commissioner and action was taken to resolve the problems identified. Further details are available in the [Welsh Language Standards Compliance Report](#). We continue to work to quickly resolve any issues identified and to put in place measures to stop mistakes happening, including working closely with the Welsh Language Commissioner's office, and so far, have received no financial penalties.

As part of our duties under the laws, we must publish two documents:

1. [Welsh Language Standards Action Plan](#) explains how we intend to comply with the standards.
2. [Welsh Language Promotion Strategy](#) sets out how we will promote the Welsh language and facilitate its use more widely in the area.

To make sure that we keep on track and meet the Welsh Language Standards, a [Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group](#) of Councillors and representatives from other interested public bodies and voluntary groups, including Fforwm Iaith, who bring together local Welsh language groups:

1. checks the progress we are making against our Promotion Strategy,
2. reviews the results of Welsh language audits to make sure that all services are delivering services in Welsh, and
3. approves major Welsh language policies that affect all services to our residents.

Our 5-year Welsh Language Promotion strategy came to an end in March 2021, and we are currently reviewing its impact, what worked well and what could be improved. A [report on our progress](#) to the [Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group](#) in April 2021 found that significant progress had been made in a number of areas over the lifetime of the strategy, with achievements including:

- Relocation and/or extension of a number of primary schools leading to an increase in Welsh medium capacity, including at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llantrisant.
- Creation of [materials](#) to encourage parents to use Welsh with their children.
- Support for using the Welsh language in social and leisure activities, including organised activities in Welsh medium secondary schools, activities in libraries and youth services.
- Training for Welsh language champions in our leisure centres.
- Development of our strategic approach to Welsh language skills, including [recruitment](#), [job descriptions](#) and training.
- Internal improvements in the Council to encourage Welsh language use by staff, including resources on the staff intranet site, recording language preferences of staff, use of bilingual signage and email signatures and simultaneous translation made available for internal meetings.

To make sure that our new Welsh Language Promotion strategy meets the needs of our residents and supports the further growth of the Welsh language, we will be talking to local people and language groups, using guidance from the Welsh Language Commissioner and getting independent advice from language planning specialists to produce our new 5-year plan, which will be published towards the end of 2021. Alongside this new plan, we are also producing a new Welsh in Education Strategic Plan for publication in 2022, which will link closely with our language promotion strategy and set out our vision for Welsh language education.

In addition to our specific Welsh Language Strategy, our commitment to the Welsh language is increasingly integrated into other key organisational strategies and processes, including our Corporate Plan. Other internal policies, for example HR, also mainstream Welsh language requirements to make sure the language is considered across our work. However, we recognise that all decisions across Council services can have an impact on someone's ability to use the Welsh language, even if this is not consciously done. For example, changes to community facilities or transport could make it easier or harder for people to access Welsh language activities. To make sure that we are fully aware of the impact of our decisions on the language, we are introducing new processes to help us. Our Welsh language Impact Assessment and Guidance tools will help our staff,



managers and Councillors to make sure that policy decisions have a positive effect on the Welsh language wherever possible, and that if we can't avoid making decisions which will not support the use of Welsh then we will work hard to reduce their impact. This information will be included in relevant Council reports. Our Welsh Language Unit have provided support to help staff understand and apply the new processes, which were introduced in May 2021.

Usually, each service also looks at what they can do to improve and increase the services we provide in Welsh, however in 2020/21 formal processes supporting this work were suspended due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This evaluation will now be carried out in autumn 2021.

As well as challenging ourselves to do better, we also work with others to help us improve. We have continued this work virtually during the pandemic, working with forums and organisations including

1. the Welsh Language Forum, made up of local voluntary groups, schools, and other key Welsh-centric local and national public bodies to progress the promotional strategy and other key work streams,
2. Grŵp Deddf, the National forum for Welsh language officers in the Public Sector
3. Grŵp Deddf Llywodraeth Lleol a Llywodraeth Cymru, a South East Wales Regional workgroup to support compliance with the regulations and share best practice,
4. Fforwm Mwy Na Geiriau, a Cwm Taf Morgannwg regional forum for Social Services and the Health Sector,
5. Welsh in Education Strategic Plan Group, and
6. the Welsh Government and Welsh Language Commissioner who help us to develop and implement our plans for the Welsh language.

Progress in some areas during 2020/21 was limited due to the impact of Covid-19. However, we have still continued to make progress and improvements

last year we said we would	and among other things we
continue to work towards our target of increasing the number of Welsh speakers in RCT by 6.8%, by the next census date of 2021.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed a process for a Welsh language impact assessment (see above).</li> <li>• Shared the RCT Bilingual Street and Place names register through the staff Intranet site to standardise the Council's approach, ensuring consistency across correspondence, maps and publications and increasing the visibility of the Welsh language on our roads.</li> <li>• Refreshed the design and content of <a href="#">Bod Yn Ddwieithog</a>, a booklet for parents of young children which provides information and promotes the benefits of choosing Welsh medium Education.</li> </ul>
continue to work with the Royal National Eisteddfod Committee on the arrangements to bring the Eisteddfod to Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2023 (now 2024)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Began preliminary planning work for the Eisteddfod, with the Council's Eisteddfod Project Officer in place to co-ordinate preparations across the Council and engaging with the National Eisteddfod officers and chair of the Working Committee (Pwyllgor Gwaith) on behalf of the Council. As a result of the impact of Covid-19, the Eisteddfod will be held in Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2024 and not 2022 as originally planned.</li> </ul>

**last year we said we would**

**and among other things we**

highlight the significance of Welsh people and culture, including the Welsh language, in Council wide campaigns relating to UK and world events.

continue to support staff to develop more advanced Welsh language skills so we can help more customers in their language of choice.

develop our processes so more customers can have their queries dealt with in Welsh by the first person they speak to.

help people use more online services in Welsh through developing bilingual software.

continue to review how well our services are offering and promoting Welsh.

- Commissioned local artists to produce a song for schools to learn, which will be recorded and used to Celebrate 'Dydd Gŵyl Dewi' in 2022.
- Held a virtual quiz for staff to mark 'Dydd Gŵyl Dewi' which was completed by nearly 500 staff members.
- Promoted 'Welsh Language Rights Day' by highlighting areas of the Council with excellent Welsh language provision through our social media accounts, for example a quarter of staff in our Youth Education and Participation service are Welsh speaking.
- Launched our first formal and integrated campaign to encourage our staff to learn Welsh, following this all Council run courses were fully booked.
- Worked with [Cymraeg Gwaith](#) (Welsh Government's Work Welsh scheme) to provide online and residential training courses to help staff improve their workplace specific Welsh language skills. 99 Members of staff fully completed various online taster courses, including the 'Welcome' course with everyday greeting and phrases, and tailored courses for Teaching and Tourism.
- Introduced 'mail-tips', which lets other staff know if someone is a Welsh speaker to encourage the use of Welsh in internal emails, increasing confidence in using written Welsh.
- Audited our recruitment processes and identified ways to improve processes to improve Welsh language capacity in key frontline services.
- Launched a new bilingual consultation website to encourage more residents to get involved digitally with engagement activities across the Council in their language of choice.
- Reviewed the impact of our 5-year Welsh Language promotion strategy (see above).
- We were unable to fully review the work of our services because of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our usual performance management and audit processes but this work will be reinstated in 2021/22.

We have received positive feedback from the [Welsh Language Commissioner](#) about our progress, so we know we are on the right track, but there is always more to do.



**Our Plans for 2021-22 include**

- Developing and publishing our new 5-year Welsh Language Promotion plan, which will set out how we aim to encourage use of the Welsh language in the County Borough and increase the number of Welsh speakers, contributing to Welsh Government’s vision for one million Welsh speakers by 2050.
- Implement further improvements to our recruitment processes to help increase the number of Welsh speaking staff in key areas.
- Continuing to work towards our target of increasing the number of Welsh speakers in the County Borough by 6.8%, by the next census date of 2021.
- Continuing to work with the Royal National Eisteddfod Committee on the arrangements to bring the Eisteddfod to Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2024, and so promote the Welsh language and culture.
- Strengthening our decision-making processes by using our impact assessment tools to review the impact of major decisions across the Council on the Welsh language.
- Continuing to help people use more online services in Welsh through developing bilingual software.
- Continuing to support staff to develop more advanced Welsh language skills so we can help more customers in their language of choice.

**Our work to promote the Welsh language is contributing to an RCT and Wales that is**

<b>Prosperous</b>	<b>Resilient</b>	<b>Healthier</b>	<b>More Equal</b>	<b>Cohesive Communities</b>	<b>Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language</b>	<b>Globally Responsible</b>
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Climate Change

### Key Information: Council

- The Council's Carbon Footprint [for 2019/20](#) has been estimated at 105,257 tCO<sub>2</sub>e i.e. tonnes of Carbon Dioxide equivalent emissions, *net 98,757tonnes*.
- The Council purchases 100% of its electrical energy supply from renewable energy sources.
- All Street lights in RCT, approx., 29,700, have been converted to LED or equivalent resulting in a 75% reduction in the energy used since 2015/16.
- The County Borough covers an area of 424 square kilometres (163 sq miles).
- There are 16 Air Quality Management Areas in RCT, where we have plans in place to improve Air Quality. (Source: [2020 Air Quality Progress Report RCT](#)).
  - Smallest AQMA – Mwyndy, 1 property.
  - Largest AQMA – Broadway, 156 properties.
- Compared to other Welsh Councils, RCT is 9/17 for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) - *1<sup>st</sup> is best*.
- Taff's Well Thermal Spring is the only Thermal Spring in Wales and 1 of 4 in the UK. Plans are in place for its use to provide low carbon heating for a new school extension block in Ffynnon Taf Primary School scheduled for completion in early 2022.
- 105 Solar Panel arrays installed across Schools and Corporate Buildings, total 1.58MW.
- 12 LED lighting schemes (saving £3.2m) across our schools, libraries, care Homes, Leisure Centres, offices, depots etc as part of our ongoing Carbon Reduction/energy conservation projects.
- 21 Hydrogen Fuel Cells throughout RCT installed in a leisure centre, schools and offices.
- 9 Biomass boilers consuming sustainable wood pellets, in use across RCT locations.
- As part of an incentive scheme for solar installations, we receive approx. £120K cashback every year for 20 years. We also save on our energy costs by generating our own energy.

### Council Buildings - The amount of Energy used and its cost

Year	Gas		Electric		Total £M
	kWh	£M	kWh	£M	
2018-19	70,164,242	2,527,434.56	28,090,259	4,838,502.37	7,365,936.93
2019/20	67,210,969	2,626,752.22	25,675,889	4,905,199.69	7,531,951.91
2020/21	51,924,490	2,028,353.42	20,642,586	3,994,198.65	6,022,522.07

- At the end of 2019 there were 3,177 renewable electricity installations across at Local Authority Level generating 815, 279 MWh of renewable energy, compared to 119, 818MWh in 2014 (Source: [UK Gov](#)).

### Key Information: County Borough

- 21% of land in RCT is Welsh Government Woodland Estate and is managed by Natural Resources Wales.
- In 2018, there were 3,862 low carbon energy generation projects in RCT (Source [Statswales](#)).
- 2019 [Government statistics](#), show that while RCT is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest producer of total carbon emissions in Wales, the County Borough is also 5<sup>th</sup> lowest when considered on a per-person basis (4.3t). 1,042.6 kilotonnes of carbon was emitted across the County Borough in 2019, equating to 4.3tCO<sup>2</sup>e per resident. See below

Sector	Kilotonnes Carbon Emissions CO <sup>2</sup>			
	<a href="#">Infobase Cymru</a>			
	2019	2018	2017	2009
Industry and Commercial inc. Agriculture	215.8	229.6	237	339.8
Public Sector	46.2	51.8	45.9	65.1
Domestic inc. Electricity Usage	355	359.7	358.3	506.4
Transport inc. road and diesel rail	438.8	453.2	454.6	461.5
Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry	-13.3	-13	-12.9	-24.1
<b>TOTAL CO<sup>2</sup> emissions</b>	<b>1042.6</b>	<b>1081.3</b>	<b>1082.8</b>	<b>1348.7</b>
<b>Tonnes CO<sup>2</sup> emissions per resident</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>6.3</b>

- RCT 'scores' 4.79 in the [Thriving Places](#) Wales index for Sustainability, i.e. below average compared to England. The sustainability score is made up from:
  - 5.07 for Energy Use - above average.
  - 4.29 for Waste - below average.
  - 4.93 for Green Infrastructure - below average.

*10 is the best possible and 0 being the worst.*

### Looking Ahead

- The evidence contained in the Evidence for the third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA3) [Summary for Wales](#) indicates that current trends suggest that when compared to 1981-2000 baseline, annual temperatures in Wales are expected to rise between approx. 1.2°C by the 2050s and between 1.3 and 2.3°C by the 2080s.
  - summer rainfall is expected to decrease by approx. 15% by 2050s and between 18% and 26% by 2080s. Despite overall summer drying, projections suggest that when it does rain, the rainfall will be more intense.
  - winter rainfall is expected to increase by approx. 6% by 2050s and between 7% and 13% by 2080s.
- Depending on global efforts to reduce Green House Gas emissions, the frequency and intensity of extreme temperature and rainfall events may also increase in future.

### [The path to Net Zero and reducing emissions in Wales](#) set out

- Demand for electricity is expected to double in Wales, and the UK, by 2050.
- Recommendations for interim targets to reach Net Zero in Wales, together with action in four key areas
  - Take up of low carbon solutions.
  - Expanding low carbon energy supplies.
  - Reducing demand for high carbon activities.
  - Transforming land.

Climate Change is the biggest threat facing our planet, extreme weather and rising seas are already affecting people and the natural world. In Rhondda Cynon Taf we have already seen the effects of heavy rainfall which so badly affected our communities in 2020, more heavy rainfall leaves us at greater risk of river and flash flooding causing damage to our homes, businesses and the environment.

Climate change is caused by increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, mostly from burning fossil fuels like coal, gas and oil. To stop climate change, these emissions must stop. This is a global challenge.

As temperatures rise, there will be more frequent heatwaves which will affect our health, the food we eat, our livelihoods and for many older and vulnerable people, life expectancy. We need to do everything we can to tackle the impact of climate change, to prevent illness and to protect the ageing population in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Finding ways that everyone who lives and works in Rhondda Cynon Taf can play a part to help tackle Climate Change is a priority for this Council. We set this out in our latest [Corporate Plan for 2020-2024, Making a Difference](#) and we have set ourselves two Climate goals.

#### **Our Climate Goals are that by 2030**

- Rhondda Cynon Taf is a Carbon Neutral Council.  
*[baseline data](#) 2019/20 - 98,757 tonnes of CO<sup>2</sup> equivalent (net)*
- The whole [County Borough](#) is as close as possible to Carbon Neutral.  
*2019 data 1042.6 kilotonnes CO<sup>2</sup> emitted (2009 baseline data 1348.7)*

By setting these goals we have shown we are serious about reducing carbon and other greenhouse gasses and taking the urgent action needed by everyone if we are to protect the planet and play our part e.g. by reducing energy in our buildings, transport and all the services we deliver. Over the last few years, we have been saving energy in all our buildings, schools and streetlights and we are recycling more waste than ever, but we know we need to do much more and more quickly. Our goals also mean we need to show strong community leadership, bring people, groups and organisations together to tackle Climate Change issues in the County Borough to meet Welsh and UK Government targets.

In [April 2019](#), the Welsh Government declared a Climate Emergency in Wales and in June 2019 published a Low Carbon Delivery Plan: [Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales](#) which set the ambition for the whole of the Welsh Public Sector to be Carbon Neutral by 2030.

In [June 2019](#), the Council started to strengthen plans e.g. to produce and save more energy, find cleaner low carbon fuelled ways of getting about and 'green up' more of RCT.

In November 2019 we held our first meeting of a [Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group](#) so that we could understand the carbon issues within the Council and the County Borough, publicly challenge ourselves to make sure that we do the right things and to check our progress so that we can meet our ambitious goals. The Steering Group is chaired by the Cabinet's Climate Champion and its members are from all political parties. The Group has community representatives from [Friends of the Earth](#), Pontypridd and [Welcome to Our Woods](#), a community partnership in the Upper Rhondda Fawr.

We made a strong early start and made progress on

- Making it easier for the community to use [underused vacant RCT land](#).
- Challenging what we have done so far to reduce our [energy use and carbon](#).
- Meeting our [legal duty for Biodiversity](#).
- Considering how Taff's Well Thermal Spring could provide [renewable energy](#) for a local Primary School.
- Finding ways that are legal, open and transparent that will help us to spend more of the Council's budget [with local businesses](#).
- Finding ways to [eliminate or reduce single use](#) plastics in Council's contracts and premises.
- Considering our [progress in recycling in RCT](#), which in turn lead to increasing our 2025 recycling target to a higher target than set by Welsh Government.
- Improving how we manage areas [of grassland to encourage wildflowers](#) and pollinating insects.
- Considering how we are working with others to put in place [sustainable travel options](#) across the County Borough, so that people are able to choose low carbon options including Active Travel.
- Taking action to [improve air quality](#) in the County Borough.
- Setting out how we raise awareness of [climate change issues and talk to residents](#) of all ages, communities, businesses and a wider range of other stakeholders so that everyone has the chance to shape our plans.
- Challenging our progress in [generating energy and calculating the Council's current](#) carbon footprint.
- Considering how we can best protect and use [Nature's Assets](#) to capture and store carbon.
- Taking early steps to make sure that Climate Change issues are considered in new homes, buildings, town centres and transport planning as part of the preparation of the [Council's Local Development Plan](#).

#### Resident's Climate comments

*".....If the Council is serious in its consideration of the climate and biodiversity emergencies then these must be addressed in the budget."*

*".....I think we are already directly witnessing the impacts of climate change in RCT as we have already seen with the devastating impact of flooding throughout 2020....."*

Whilst our early progress slowed during the pandemic when the focus was working to keep communities safe, behind the scenes work was continuing, including putting in place a core budget of [£100,000](#) to help increase the pace of our work.

By April 2021 the Steering Group had a draft [Climate Change Strategy](#) in place and was able to start the Climate Change Conversation '[Let's Talk Climate Change RCT](#)' so that everyone has the chance to shape our plans for the future. The draft strategy set out how we will reduce carbon and tackle Climate Change and in particular

- What we will do within the Council and across its services.
- What we will do within the County Borough.

We also started another conversation '[Let's Talk Electric Vehicle Charging](#)' and more Let's Talk Conversations will follow. You can see our video 'Think Climate' [here](#).

#### **Our plans for 2021-22**

We are keen to involve as many people as possible in the work to tackle the climate challenge in Rhondda Cynon Taf and providing the opportunity for people to have their say. We will continue talking to residents, communities, businesses and partners.

We will also be firming up some detailed plans so we can show you our progress and working with Welsh Government, Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and other partners to make sure that we are on track to meet our targets.

**Within the Council's services we will also continue to**

- Use less energy in our buildings, vehicles and equipment.
- Use our land and buildings to produce energy that we can use.
- Recycle more of the waste we collect.
- Make sure that what we buy for the Council today isn't harmful to people, nature or the planet in the future.
- Help staff to find new and different ways to work so that they use their cars less.
- Put council services closer to people or make them easier to get to by bus or train.

**Across the County Borough our plans include**

- Using wind, water, waste and energy from the sun to generate clean energy that we can use in local buildings and homes.
- Using and recycling more of the waste we collect.
- Helping people to get about more easily using more buses, trains and bikes.
- Making sure that fumes from traffic are kept as low as possible.
- Helping to put in charging points to make it easier for people to use electric cars.
- Using natural ways to help stop flooding, wildfires and keep carbon in the ground.
- Helping more people to get together to enjoy and protect nature and wildlife across RCT.

**In homes, work and businesses our plans include**

- Making sure that our plans for what and where we build,
  - don't add more carbon to the air, and
  - protect our biodiversity and the carbon stored in soils, trees and other plants across the County Borough.
- Helping people to use less energy in their homes.
- Helping to make sure new houses are not built on land that hasn't already been built on and people can get to them without a car.
- Helping to make sure that new houses and commercial buildings can make and store their own energy and have charging points for electric cars.
- Helping people and landlords to make changes to homes so they use less and greener energy.
- Encouraging and helping local businesses to find ways to waste less, reduce pollution and protect the environment.
- Helping local businesses to find products less harmful to nature.
- Finding ways to buy more of what the Council's services need locally.
- Planting trees and shrubs in town centres.
- Helping children and young people in our schools to understand more about nature and the climate.
- Helping people of all ages to train or retrain for new skills so that they can find jobs and create changes in companies that will help to protect the planet.

**For people who live, work and visit RCT, our plans include**

- Providing information that will help people to make choices in their lives that can help put less carbon in the air. For example, wasting less, recycling more, driving less, driving more slowly and not running the engine when the car is stopped.
- Encouraging and helping people to make their homes more energy efficient.
- Making space in Ynysangharad Park where people can learn about local nature, practice new skills and take part in activities that will help the climate and grow fresh vegetables for local foodbanks.
- Encouraging more people to join with others to enjoy and help nature.
- Offering land to people and groups so that they can grow their own fruit and vegetables and to share them with others.
- Giving more vegetarian meal choices to children and young people in schools and people who receive Meals on Wheels.

Governments around the world are making laws and signing agreements to show their commitment to speed up work that needs to be done to stop the temperature from rising. Countries will be coming together at a global conference ‘[COP 26](#)’ hosted by the UK Government in Glasgow in November 2021 where they will be asked to show their plans to reduce carbon and are expecting the Welsh Government’s Plan in the Autumn 2021.

The work to tackle Climate Change will not stop and no single plan or report can tell you about everything we are doing to play our part to tackle Climate Change, but Rhondda Cynon Taf is committed to playing its part.

**Our work to tackle Climate Change is contributing to an RCT and Wales that is**

<b>Prosperous</b>	<b>Resilient</b>	<b>Healthier</b>	<b>More Equal</b>	<b>Cohesive Communities</b>	<b>Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language</b>	<b>Globally Responsible</b>
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



## **Biodiversity**

### **Key Information:**

- Over 70% of land in Rhondda Cynon Taf is classed as countryside, while total tree coverage is approximately 33%.
- Urban tree coverage was estimated to be [18.5% in 2013](#) and RCT the 5<sup>th</sup> most tree clad County in Wales.
- There are at least 85 different kinds of bee throughout old coal tips in RCT, alongside a wide range of other insects, lichen, fungi and flowers.
- RCT supports at least 13 species of bats, including the rare Barbastelle and Lesser Horseshoe bats.
- Two thirds of the land within the County Borough has been identified as high-importance for wildlife, including Local Nature Reserves, Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation.
- 120 hectares of grassland in RCT will be managed as meadow in 2021 – that’s nearly 126 Principality Stadium pitches.
- 10 parks and sites throughout the County Borough have been awarded Green Flag status for accessibility and exemplary management, recognising the high standards of our parks and green and outdoors spaces.
- According to the [State of Nature Report 2019](#), of the 6,500 plant and animal species in Wales, 523 (8%) are under threat of extinction from the UK, 666 (17%) are under threat of extinction from Wales, and 73 (2%) are already extinct in Wales.

Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth, comprising all plants and animals, as well as the ecosystems in which they live. Alongside all other Local Authorities, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has a duty under [The Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#) to maintain and enhance its biodiversity, taking account of the diversity, scale, condition and adaptability within its local ecosystems. This is in addition to the requirements of the [Well-being of Future Generations Act \(Wales\) 2015](#), which itself compels public bodies to think about the long-term impact of their decisions and to safeguard our local environments in pursuit of becoming a [more resilient](#) and [more globally responsible Wales](#).

To meet the Biodiversity Duty of the Environment Act, the Council must also produce a report to the Welsh Government every 3-years outlining what has been done to improve biodiversity across the County Borough. The [first Biodiversity Report from Rhondda Cynon Taf](#), in 2019, demonstrated the positive work going on across the Council, and also set out where we could do better. This includes valuing our undisturbed grasslands and our unique coal spoil habitats as well as making more use of our schools’ grounds to provide opportunities for pupils to learn about and engage with nature.

Biodiversity plays a huge part in the work to tackle Climate Change and this was recognised in the [Council’s Corporate Plan 2020-24, ‘Making a Difference’](#). More detailed plans to support Biodiversity and other environmental issues are being developed in more detail as part of the work of the [Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group](#). You will find more information about how the Council is playing its part to tackle Climate Change in Section 13.



Despite the challenges created by the pandemic, we were able to progress much of the work we had planned.

### Our work in 2020/21 included

- Finding ways to help capture more carbon by progressing our work to restore/'re-wet' around 700 hectares of peatlands which have dried out or degraded e.g. between wind turbines in the uplands.
- Began reviewing the publicly owned land across RCT to find sites where we can restore peat bogs.
- Continuing to update the [Action for Nature plan](#) for RCT. Although public and volunteer events could not take place due to Covid restrictions, we were able to hold a monthly programme of online events. The [Local Nature Partnership](#) was also able to gather information on what to include and how to present the new Plan. [Contact us you would like to get involved.](#)
- Focusing on [Natures Assets](#) in RCT, including our extensive existing semi-natural habitats and undisturbed soils, the natural regeneration of woodland and the development of 'Green Infrastructure'.
- Using Welsh Government funding to plant approx. 300 trees in our parks and cemeteries. The aim is to help tackle the impact of climate change and pollution in urban areas as well as to support local wildlife.
- Completing a review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation as part of the work to prepare the [new Local Development Plan for RCT](#).
- Residents have been invited to get involved in the development of the new plan in our [Let's Talk Local Development Plan](#) conversation so that they can have their say about where we build and how we protect our wonderful natural resources, historical heritage, wildlife habitats, open space and our beautiful landscapes.
- Looking at natural ways we can tackle the effects of Climate Change. This includes
  - the 'Pretty Ponty' rain garden scheme in Mill Street, which is funded by the Welsh Government Town Centre Initiative, and
  - managing Pant Marsh, near Y Pant school, Pontyclun, to maintain this important floodplain, a [video](#) is also available.
- Investigating the possibility of creating a coal spoil nature reserve and community area as part of the solution to safely remove the landslip material from the Rhondda Fach river and other unstable material on the hillside.

#### Supporting [Wildflowers and Grassland](#) in Rhondda Cynon Taf

The impact of Covid on Council grass cutting in early summer 2020 allowed a magnificent display of wildflowers on our verges to flourish. We also put more areas of RCT into a 'cut and collect' system of mowing which provides the best environment for wildflowers to grow and encourages bees, other pollinating insects and creatures. The 'cut and collect' machinery did the work but the '[Grab your Rake](#)' scheme that invites residents to help in areas that the machinery cannot reach was limited by the pandemic.

The good news is that the Welsh Government is relaxing Covid restrictions which means we are expecting to see more areas where wildflowers are allowed to flourish through the 'cut and collect' system of mowing and the return of 'Grab your Rake' activities. You can see where this is happening from September 2021 on [Let's Talk Wildflowers](#).

**Our plans for 2021/22 include:**

- Completing the Biodiversity website and providing more opportunities for people to get involved in Biodiversity in RCT through ‘[Let’s Talk RCT](#)’ projects.
- Increasing the areas that we manage in ways that encourage wildflowers to flourish through the ‘cut and collect’ system of mowing. We will also continue to invite residents to ‘grab you rake’ and to get involved by telling us what plants they see and to suggest other places where we can ‘cut and collect’.
- Working as part of the Local Nature Partnership we will review our ‘Action for Nature’ plan to show how we can help nature thrive in RCT. We will be setting out what action we need to take and how everyone can help.
- Taking forward the ‘[Living Landscape](#)’ projects to help with delivering the [Local Nature Plan](#) talking to residents and communities. Linking local sites and community groups with each other can show how working together benefits everyone, as well as the wildlife.
- Continuing to support the [Healthy Hillside](#)s projects at Penrhys slopes, Clydach Vale, land near Rhondda Heritage Park and Y Graig Common, Llantrisant.
- Continuing to assess Planning Applications for their impact on biodiversity. This includes wildlife management plans for a development, identifying opportunities to protect or improve habitats and making sure planning conditions and agreements are delivered by the developer. For example, the sustainable long-term management of public open spaces, protecting trees and hedges meadows and wildlife corridors.
- Making sure the new Local Development Plan considers natural ways to address the climate and nature emergencies.
- Continuing to investigate what more we can do to prevent carbon loss and promote more carbon capture in the peatlands across the County Borough.
- Considering the most effective ways to raise staff awareness of both the [climate](#) and [nature](#) emergencies declared in Wales, so that they inform everything we do in the Council.
- Contributing to the [Queen’s Green Canopy](#) - to mark her Majesty’s Platinum Jubilee, as part of our wider plans to for planting the ‘Right Tree in the Right Place’ across RCT and protecting our ancient woodland.
- Helping to increase the biodiversity in our schools, e.g. helping nature to thrive in waste ground and more children to get involved and be hands-on with nature in new Green Roof outdoor classrooms. The green roofs of the classroom will also provide a home for more plants and insects.

You can find out more about the rich Biodiversity in the County Borough on our [website](#).

**Our work to tackle Biodiversity is contributing to an RCT and Wales that is**

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language	Globally Responsible
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Involving people and communities

We have a good track record of talking to residents and communities and finding out what matters to them. We are always looking for better and easier ways for people to get involved and to give their views and opinions on the decisions that affect them. In 2020/21 we were unable to have our usual conversations with people face to face and so where possible we continue to have these conversations online. Our focus was on communicating the right information at the right time to provide support and assurance to our residents throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

In recent years we have been out and about talking to residents in town centres, in supermarkets and at community events we have held in our parks and other public spaces. We have found that by talking to people face to face we get to know more about what is happening in communities when it isn't always obvious.

Over the last year we have, as far as possible, continued to engage and involve residents and communities in matters that affect them so that their voices are heard in Council decisions and in response to the actions we take. We have also continued to meet with the three youth fora to hear their concerns and contributions, including about how young people are being affected by Covid. We have used Zoom to hold public meetings and conversations and continued to use online surveys. We also gave the option of a telephone call back to people who were not online.

We are providing more 'easy to read' information to help people to give us their views. Working alongside Learning Disability Wales we produced an '[easy read](#)' pack for children and young people about our plans for Llyn y Forwyn school in Ferndale, alongside an easy to complete survey. We also produced a [video](#) so that children could see the plans in more detail.

Our work this year included:

- [Setting the Council's Budget](#) in which residents completed an online survey and also attended online 'Zoom' meetings to give us their views about our 2021-22 budget, Council Tax levels and our Investment and Saving plans. We also held Zoom meetings with young people's representatives from schools and colleges and our Older Persons' Advisory Group 'OPAG'. For those people who could not access online surveys or meetings we set up a telephone helpline and provided them with help to complete the survey if they needed it.
- **Flood survey** - during January 2021 [we asked people](#) whose lives had been affected by the flooding caused by storms in early 2020, to complete an online survey so that we could put together local knowledge and information about the flooding. Over 300 residents provided images and told us about their experiences. What people told has informed [Section-19](#) legal flood investigations. Once these investigations are complete, the Council will publish a report based on all the investigation findings and make recommendations about how the different organisations involved in preventing and tackling flooding can do better. You can see more about how the Council responded to the floods in the [PLACES evaluation](#).
- **Plans for the Muni Arts Centre Pontypridd** – We wanted to involve our residents in our ambitious plans for the 'Muni' in Pontypridd in a different way. We asked people to share their stories and pictures about the Muni's past as a Wesleyan Chapel and its more recent times. We then started talking to residents and stakeholders online on 'Zoom' about their

ideas and what they thought about our plans for its future. We also displayed pictures of our plans in the windows of Llys Cadwyn in Pontypridd so that everyone had the chance to see them from a safe distance and those people who were not able to join online could give us their views on a telephone helpline.

- [Renewing the Dog Fouling Public Spaces Protection Order \(PSPO\)](#) To get the views of residents and other interested parties about renewing the dog fouling PSPO for a further three years, we carried out an online survey and a virtual 'drop in' event via Zoom. At the same time, we used Social Media to promote the survey and 'drop in' and encouraged people to give us their views by e-mail. We also provided a telephone helpline number and freepost address so that those people who were not able to join online could easily get involved. You can see more about the PSPO consultation together with the results in the [PLACES evaluation](#).
- **Integrated Network Map Review** – As part of the Welsh Government's Active Travel funding we started the [review of the Council's Integrated Network Maps](#) which will set our plans for walking and cycling routes for the next 15 years. The review included an opportunity for residents to have their say about what they would like to see, what is currently good and where we could do better, in an online [consultation](#) which took place in early 2021. Over 650 responses were received. Active Travel can have significant economic, health and environmental benefits for residents, communities and business and the review will be submitted to Welsh Government during December 2021.

We also introduced a new way that everyone who lives, works and visits Rhondda Cynon Taf can give their views and opinions on our projects. '[Let's Talk RCT](#)' is a new online engagement tool that provides many different ways to get involved, including through easy to complete surveys quick polls and simple ways to drop in ideas and stories. The first two projects [Let's Talk Climate Change](#) and [Let's Talk Electric Vehicle Charging](#) were our pilots for the site and the lessons we learn have helped us to shape other 'Let's Talk' projects.

Putting in place online and virtual ways for people to give us views and opinions will continue to develop but they won't replace the valuable local information we get by getting out and about and talking to people. We are keen to restart these conversations with individuals and with representative groups as soon as it is safe to do so. Our plans for this year are set out in more detail below.

With the focus on tackling the impact of the pandemic, there was a greater need to communicate clear advice and keep residents informed about Covid-19 in RCT, the support available from the Council and our partners and how services were adapting to focus on keeping people safe.

To give information coming from Governments about Covid restrictions some local context, we regularly posted information about how that information applied in RCT on a [dedicated Covid-19 webpage](#) and through our Social Media channels. Because of how often and how quickly national information changed and the confusion between Welsh and English decisions, we wanted to make information clear and easy for everyone in RCT to see, including using graphics. We also used Social Media channels, [@rctcbc](#) and [Facebook](#), videos and our main [Website](#) to make other important information available to residents, businesses and communities throughout the different levels of restrictions, just a few of the hundreds of examples are listed below

- [where residents could get practical help to get food and shopping](#).

- [providing support through our Community Resilience Centres.](#)
- [funding for food banks and mental health support during firebreak lockdown.](#)
- [how business could access grants](#) and [residents could access financial help](#) available [or help towards rent arrears.](#)
- up to date health messages, [including stay at home](#) for people with Covid symptoms.
- [where and when residents and employers in the area](#) could access community testing.
- the steps that residents needed [to know about when and where](#) they would get vaccinated.
- [school opening and transport arrangements.](#)
- [the dangers of ‘Scammers’](#) who continued to prey on people’s vulnerability.
- where people who were at [risk of violence or abuse](#) could get help.

This is just some of the information we made available, and you can see much more in our [‘Newsroom’](#).

As the Council’s services re-open alongside the lives of our residents, we are planning ahead for 2021/22 and our plans include

- continuing to talk to and involve residents and communities in matters that affect them and encouraging them to get involved so that more voices are heard in Council decisions, returning to face to face conversations when it is safe to do so, including our continuing Climate conversation and plans for leisure, sport and fitness facilities.
- making sure that our arrangements for involving and engaging with residents and communities are still relevant following their experiences of the pandemic.
- making sure the Council meets its new legal duty to ‘increase public participation in local democracy and improving transparency’ this means doing more to get people interested and involved in the work of the Council and making it easier for them to get involved in the decisions the Council is making.
- continuing to make our surveys and information more accessible to residents, by increasing the use and availability of easy-to-read materials. We will also be training our staff to produce plain English materials.
- continuing to increase the use of digital engagement, by increasing our use of social and digital media.
- continuing to develop ‘virtual’ involvement and engagement whilst making sure that the voices of people without access to IT and technology are heard.

**Our work to involve the people and communities is contributing to an RCT and Wales that is**

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language	Globally Responsible
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Listening to and learning from your feedback

We have a good track record of talking to our residents and we continue to improve how we have these conversations, but we also need to learn from what people tell us when they call, email or contact us through social media.

The Council's services have thousands of contacts from residents and businesses every day. These contacts may be making an enquiry, asking for a service, paying a bill or making a booking in our leisure centres.

In 2020-21

- 465,229 customer contacts were dealt with by the Council's Contact Centre including emails, social media, Lifeline, bookings, payments and applications.
- Within our Corporate Feedback Scheme,
  - 66% of contact was through the Council's website.
  - emails increased to 20% from 8.5% in 2019/20.
  - telephone contacts reduced to 6% from 14% in 2019/20.  
as a result of the Council's usual contact centre arrangements being unavailable for a period of during the Covid restrictions.

You can see more about how we are using digital technology to improve our customer services in [Section 6](#).

As part of the Council's formal Complaints, Compliments and Comments processes the Council received:

- 750 complaints
- 221 compliments
- 132 comments

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales reported receiving 39 complaints for RCT in his most recent report 2019/20. The second lowest of the 22 Councils in Wales

When we are looking at how our services are performing, we consider what our residents are telling us, and more importantly, what we do with this information.

This information is valuable as it helps us to understand what residents think, where we need to take action and how we can improve. It helps us to better understand the needs of residents, businesses and those who visit and work in the County Borough.

We also use the formal system of Comments, Compliments and Complaints that we receive through social media and our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. Councillors are able to check this information in reports to the [Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#). These reports also set out what has been done to improve services following feedback in previous reports.

We also [report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) so that Councillors can see the responses received through the [Council's Corporate Feedback Scheme](#). This also includes developments and improvements to the scheme in the previous 6 months. As part of our arrangements, we also provide



quarterly reports to [the Public Services Ombudsman \(PSOW\)](#). These reports provide information on the number of comments, compliments and complaints we have received and the outcomes of these. Should a customer disagree with the outcome of a complaint once it has been investigated by the Council, they can refer the matter to the Public Services Ombudsman to request an independent investigation.

It is important that as a Council we can evidence that we learn from our residents' feedback and from other Local Authorities where they have received recommendations for improvements from the PSOW. We have been working with the PSOW to help us compare the quality of our services, processes and policies with other Councils across Wales so that we can improve. The most recent PSOW was published in November 2020 [Annual Report for 2019/2020](#) ('AR'). The purpose of the AR is to report on the performance of the PSOW's office over the year, provide an update on developments and to deliver any key messages arising from their work carried out during the year.

**Our work in 2020/21 included:**

- Continuing to respond to formal feedback particularly complaints. Despite disruptions due to the Covid pandemic, of the 750 complaints we received 95% were resolved at Stage 1 with 5% dealt with at Stage 2. This is the same level of service provided before the pandemic.
- Using information and feedback received from social media and digital channels e.g. to help inform how services responded to Covid restrictions.
- Introducing a new Customer Feedback Scheme Policy, that meets the Welsh Language Commissioner's and the Public Service Ombudsman's requirements.

**Our plans for 2021/22 include:**

- Using our new website called 'Let's Talk RCT' to promote conversation with residents on specific topics e.g. Climate Change and more general feedback from residents on Council services.
- Providing more information about what we have done as a result of what people tell us.
- Putting in place a new system that will strengthen how we record, analyse, report and use customer feedback to inform service improvement.
- Providing more information about the level of service our customers can expect.
- Improving how we capture complaints, comments and compliments through social media.

We know we must get better at letting our residents know what we have done with the feedback they provide, and this will be our focus in 2021/22.

**Contributing to an RCT and Wales that is**

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language	Globally Responsible
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## **Giving Back**

Throughout the year, the Council, Councillors and staff support many charities in their own time, in many different ways, giving back to the community they serve. The restrictions caused by Covid-19 particularly staff working from home, has meant many usual fundraising activities such as bake sales, dress down days and sponsored events have been less visible. However, staff have found other ways to support their local communities and charities.

**Giving Gifts** - Despite the challenges that faced us all in the last year, there remained a strong sense of community as residents, businesses and staff supported communities and people needing help. Staff as well as our residents continued to support our annual [Santa Appeal](#) to make sure no child missed out on a gift at Christmas. To meet the Welsh Government rules on social distancing and sanitising, the Santa appeal requested a donation of gift vouchers instead of the usual new toys or other gifts. 743 gift vouchers were received, among them a £1,000 donation from the Mayor's Charity.

**Giving Money** - Staff continued to donate cash to charity instead of sending Christmas cards and this year many more staff reported donating to charities and held virtual quizzes and events for [Red Nose day](#).

**Giving essentials** - At the beginning of the pandemic, Council staff were [redeployed to food distribution centres](#) helping distribute supplies to vulnerable and shielding residents in the county borough, as well as delivering food parcels. This also included a prescription collection/delivery service, and dog walking. Any surplus food left over from the distribution centres was donated to Homeless charities.

Council staff also volunteered to move from their normal jobs to provide support to the Community and to work in the Test, Trace and Protect Service. Staff undertaking new roles included 120 working in Community Hubs, 95 providing phone calls to shielding residents and 30 in food banks. 40 staff supported Covid testing in our communities. 5 of our Occupational Health staff were transferred to work in vaccination centres and 30 more staff received training as vaccinators to enable the roll out of the vaccine to be quicker and more efficient. In addition, 275 staff received training to support our care homes and assist with home care in the event of staff shortages.

## **Giving well-being**

### **Christmas Pantomime**

### **Kilimanjaro to Clydach**

A member of our staff, James, is a committed fund raiser for Cancer Research Wales. James was planning to follow up his 70km fundraising trek through Iceland in 2019 with a climb to Kilimanjaro in February 2020 before Covid restrictions made this impossible. So, he found alternative ways to raise funds during lockdown including.

- Running, cycling or hiking for 2.6 miles a day for 26 days.
- Completing a daily winter '10-minute dip a day' for 30 days in chilly Clydach lake.

Along with other fundraising activities James raised over £16,100 in the last year.

James said "I enjoy the challenge and it's great to be able to give something back and even in tough times it's been really humbling to have such fantastic support from people who always seem willing to donate".



It was not possible to stage the Council’s traditional family ‘Panto’ in our theatres in 2020, so we put it [online for free](#). This allowed children and families to enjoy some Panto magic over the festive period. Comprising five short panto stories that ran every afternoon from 19-24 December, with each day telling a new story. On average each story was viewed by 2,000 households via YouTube, which was audio described and also featured BSL sign language.

**Nos Galan Virtual race**

Another of our annual events that was affected by the Covid restrictions was our Nos Galan, a 5k road race on New Year’s Eve in Mountain Ash. So that we kept alive the spirit of the race and didn’t disappoint the thousands of runners, we moved the event [online](#). We weren’t able to feature the usual Mystery Runner or the excitement that the event traditionally brings to Mountain Ash, but we were able to attract [2,600 participants](#) in a virtual race, which gave competitors a month to complete the distance and upload the evidence, compared to 1, 700 actual runners in 2019.

**Photography Challenge**

To celebrate Walking Month in May 2020 and to encourage residents to make the most of their walks, we [held a Smartphone Photography challenge](#), which encouraged residents to get outdoors and walk whilst taking photographs of whatever captured spring time for them.

**Giving Opportunities**

We recruited 26 Graduates and 33 Apprentices, which is more than our usual numbers, so that more young people had employment opportunities during these challenging times.

**Giving the Spotlight**

To people and groups in our communities e.g., International Women’s Day, Black History Month and many Health Awareness campaigns. We continued to raise awareness of PRIDE Cymru and its alternative online event in August 2020 and we sponsored a panel discussion [The Rainbow United](#) which looked at how people from all parts of the community can support each other.

**Giving Blood**

We also continued to encouraged staff to donate blood, providing the opportunity to do so in work time if necessary. Since the pandemic staff have continued to attend sessions which are offered regularly to keep blood supplies stocked up.

**Giving Support**

by providing access to council buildings, parks and pitches to charities so that they can hold activities within communities when it is safe to do and globally as a partner in [PONT](#). PONT is a charity funded by local people based on friendship, commitment and respect and providing support and community-to-community links to Mbale Uganda. Among other things PONT has provided motorbike ambulances, trained thousands of healthcare workers and has twinned with over 100 local schools.

**Contributing to an RCT and Wales that is**

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language	Globally Responsible
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Working now for the well-being of future generations

Put simply, the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) is a Welsh law that makes sure that the decisions that are taken today are not at the expense of the well-being of the generations that follow.

The Act applies to 44 public bodies across Wales, including RCT, and puts a legal duty on the Council to improve the Social, Economic, Environmental and Cultural well-being of its residents.

Since the law came into force, we have been making sure that we embed what the law requires so that it becomes business as usual for all services. Our new Corporate Plan covering 2020-24 '[Making a Difference](#)', sets the scene for how we will improve the Social, Economic, Environmental and Cultural well-being of our residents, through our priorities of PEOPLE, PLACES and PROSPERITY.

The Act also asks us to contribute to seven national Well-being Goals and apply five ways of working to help to challenge what we do.



Applying the five Ways of Working means we

- balance the short term needs with planning for the future.
- work with other partners to deliver our objectives.
- involve those with an interest in our work and seek their views.
- put resources into preventing problems altogether or getting worse.
- consider the effect of our work with that of other public bodies and organisations.

You will see many examples of how we have applied these Ways of Working throughout this report, although we know that there is more to do.

The law also means we need to think more about our services that work behind the scenes so that they also help to deliver our plans and to meet the Well-being requirements. These 'back-room' services provide the best possible support to our frontline services, so that as a Council we can continue to focus and deliver our priorities at the pace required and to make best use of resources available. The work of these 'back-office' services are described by the Act as 'Core Activities' which are *"likely to most effectively secure the type of change required"*.

WFG Act Core Activity	RCT Progress
Corporate Planning	<p>This includes setting Well-being Objectives that will improve the Social, Economic, Environmental and Cultural well-being of our residents. In RCT, as part of agreeing our new Corporate Plan, Councillors agreed that our priorities should be considered as our Well-being Objectives. This Plan, 'Making a Difference' will direct our work between 2020 and 2024. The performance processes that underpin how we deliver our priorities include how we challenge ourselves to do better through our self-evaluation and assessment arrangements.</p> <p>Our experience and understanding of our strengths and where we can improve mean that we are well placed to meet the performance requirements of the new <a href="#">Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021</a>.</p> <p>We continue to increase our knowledge and understanding of the how the Act should be applied, learning from residents' feedback and recognised good practice.</p>
Financial Planning	<p>Our budget strategy is key to the delivery of our Priorities. We spend our budgets on what matters most to residents and communities, directing our resources to our priorities and finding ways to work more efficiently, work better with partners and share our resources within continuing financial challenges.</p> <p>Applying the principles of the Act for all financial planning is challenging. Long term funding settlements are uncertain and opportunities to benefit from one-off funding opportunities are sometimes limited by grant conditions. Despite these challenges, we work hard to maximise opportunities from any additional funds that we can use to deliver our priorities.</p> <p>In 2020/21, we managed our budgets despite the financial impacts of significant storm damage and an unprecedented pandemic and agreed a Council Tax increase of 2.65%, the lowest in Wales for 2021/22.</p>
Work force Planning *internal links only	<p>Our <a href="#">*HR strategy</a> sets out how we will deliver our priorities by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruiting and retaining the best possible employees in the labour market, and</li> <li>• Developing staff in order for the workforce to fulfil its potential by having the required skills, resilience and capability to meet future challenges and opportunities.</li> </ul> <p>Our work force planning is also driven by our priorities. <a href="#">*Our Workforce Plan</a> aims to make sure that our staff are trained and developed and able to meet the current and future challenges we face, so that the service for residents, communities and business are the best they can be. Our Workforce Plan sets out how we will make sure that we have the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time.</p>

WFG Act Core Activity	RCT Progress
	<p>During 2020/21, our staff have been tested like never before and have worked tirelessly throughout the floods and pandemic, demonstrating the strength of an organisation that is committed to providing the best possible services to residents, communities and businesses. We have also continued to recruit graduates and apprentices and to provide employment opportunities for residents in the most challenging times.</p>
Procurement	<p>We continue to make sure that what we buy for the Council benefits society and has limited impact on the environment and that economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being outcomes are included in our tenders. Last year, we also sourced and procured suitable and sufficient Personal Protective Equipment and other supplies needed to keep our staff and services operating safely.</p> <p>We are also preparing to implement the <a href="#">Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill 2021</a> which will be enacted in early 2022. The Bill puts in place a duty on all public services to “ensure that public procurement is undertaken in a socially responsible manner, using the power of the public purse to the broad benefit of people and communities in Wales”. As part of this work, we are reviewing our Procurement Strategy to make sure it meets the new duties and supports the delivery of the Council’s priorities.</p> <p>The arrangements we have in place mean that we are already well placed to meet this new duty. For example, buying electricity that is generated from 100% renewable energy sources, and spending with local business. Of our £232M spend with suppliers in 2020/21, almost £63M was with businesses within RCT, £151M in South East Wales and £155M in Wales, all of which supports and benefits the local economy and workforce. But we know we have more to do and we are also considering how we can use the recommendations contained within the Future Generations Commissioner’s report ‘<a href="#">Procuring Well-being in Wales</a>’ published earlier this year and best practice to strengthen our arrangements.</p>
Managing our Assets	<p>In the last year, the Covid-19 restrictions have had a significant impact on how the Council’s buildings have been used. Office staff have worked differently, and at home, with many more of our services delivered ‘online’. Our experience over the last year will help us to plan and shape the use of office space in the future.</p> <p>We manage our assets to help us achieve our Vision of making Rhondda Cynon Taf ‘the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy and prosperous’ and to deliver our priorities. We make sure that we make best use of our buildings to benefit our residents and communities, e.g. community use of our schools and our <a href="#">RCT Together</a> programme that supports local groups and organisations through the process of ‘taking-over’ the responsibility of managing Council buildings or land.</p>

WFG Act Core Activity	RCT Progress
	<p>We also have to live within our means, taking every opportunity to reduce the Council's running costs and reduce the Council's Carbon Footprint to 'Net Zero' by 2030. In <a href="#">June 2020</a>, we reported to the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group that the overall Net Emissions for the Council was 98,757tonnes of Carbon Dioxide equivalent (98,757 tCO2e), providing the base data on which to measure our progress. We know we have more to do to strengthen the data within the Footprint and to meet the recently issued <a href="#">Welsh Government Public Sector Net Zero Reporting Guide</a> and this will remain a priority for the Council.</p>
Managing Risks	<p>We identify short, medium and long-term risks that will need to be mitigated to help us to deliver our Corporate Priorities. These are set out in our <a href="#">Strategic Risk Register</a>.</p>
Managing our Performance	<p>We continue to make information about what we do and how well we do it, widely available on our website. Our performance planning and monitoring arrangements are focused on meeting our priorities. This report is one of the ways we make this information more accessible to people, communities and our partners. We make sure that everything we do is focussed on what people have told us are important to them and continue to find new and different ways to involve residents and communities in our work and the decisions that affect them.</p> <p>We continue to look for ways we can share relevant data with our partners to help us improve all public services in RCT and strengthen the information we have available. We also continue to lobby national bodies, e.g. Data Cymru, the Future Generations Commissioner and Welsh Government to improve access to a wider range of consistent, timely and relevant information about Future Trends that will help us with our long-term planning.</p>

With a clear focus on the response to Covid-19 and recovery planning, a scheduled review of our approach to implementing the Act during 2020 by our independent regulators Audit Wales, could not take place.

However, we continue to build on findings from our most recent review to strengthen our processes. The findings from this review of investment for [leisure facilities](#), were generally positive i.e. *"There are clear examples of how the Council is applying the sustainable development principle to its investment in leisure facilities, but there are opportunities to develop longer term planning and involve people in shaping future leisure provision"*. We will use these findings to help us to improve how we develop our new plans for leisure that will appear later this year.

As well as learning from these reviews we also

1. use advice, guidance and feedback from the Future Generations Commissioner, Audit Wales reports and best practice to challenge what we do, how we continue to embed the Act into our work, and to lobby for more national support where necessary.

2. apply what we learn from our own pilot projects in the Council to test and further improve our arrangements.
3. continue to work with national bodies, e.g. Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association and Future Generations Commissioner so that collectively we can improve how we join together different national policies.
4. work with national partners to find stronger and more consistent information about future trends that will help us to improve our long-term thinking.
5. continue to seek a solution that will allow/enable appropriate data sharing with partners.
6. contribute positively and support the work of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board and the Regional Partnership Board. In 2021/22, this includes the Well-being and Population Assessments.

We know we can't do everything ourselves and we have a strong track record of working with others, which has been strengthened even more during the last year. You will see many examples throughout this report. We have also continued to work in regional partnerships such as the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal to smaller local partnerships. You can see some examples of how and where we work with others on our [Working with Others](#) page on our website. There are also many other everyday examples of where we talk to and work with other public bodies so that we can overcome shared local difficulties. The strength of these relationships was key to the speed with which we were able to respond to local challenges arising from Covid-19, particularly with the Health Board and the Third sector where we worked to provide residents and communities with direct support in their communities.

The Act also puts a legal duty on the Council to work in a formal partnership with other public bodies in a Public Services Board (PSB). What this means is public services covering the Council's area, must work as part of a Public Services Board, finding out how they can make the biggest difference to people and communities by working better together.

As RCT works with many of the same public bodies as Merthyr Tydfil CBC, e.g., South Wales Fire and Rescue, South Wales Police and former Cwm Taf University Health Board, in 2016 the Councils agreed to join together to form a joint PSB, the [Cwm Taf Public Services Board](#) (PSB), covering the Cwm Taf areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil. I

In April 2019 the Cwm Taf UHB was joined by the Bridgend Council area to form the Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) University Health Board.

There are currently no clear plans in place to expand the Cwm Taf PSB to reflect the changes in the Health Board boundaries. However, there is commitment for closer and more regional working and better integration between the work of the various Partnership Boards e.g. the Regional Partnership Board, to make better use of partnership resources. This is evidenced by the Cwm Taf and Bridgend PSBs work to produce a joint [Well-being Assessment](#) to cover the CTM area. The new CTM Well-being Assessment is scheduled for completion in 2022 and will refresh and replace the Assessments for the two separate areas completed in 2017. The Assessment will drive and shape new arrangements that will bring together the two PSBs for a new joint Well-being Plan on and from early 2023.

At the same time, Regional Partnership Board will be working on a Population Needs Assessment. The two Boards will be sharing resources, data, and information to minimise duplication and overlap.



The Cwm Taf PSB set out how it would improve the Well-being of the Cwm Taf area through four Well-being Objectives in its first [Well-being Plan](#), published in 2018. The four Well-being Objectives are

Thriving Communities	promoting safe, confident, strong, and thriving communities improving the well-being of residents and visitors and building on our community assets.
Healthy People	helping people live long and healthy lives and overcome any challenge.
Strong Economy	growing a strong local economy with sustainable transport that attracts people to live, work and play in Cwm Taf.
Tackling Loneliness and Isolation	finding new ways to channel the undoubted strengths of our communities, including volunteering to tackle more effectively the loneliness and isolation which often exists within many of them.

The Council is a lead partner for the Thriving Communities objective and is also actively involved in the other three Well-being objectives. You can see more information about the PSB's work and progress on its [website](#). How we are working with our PSB partners has been described throughout this report. The PSB published its first annual report in [July 2019](#) and its latest report was published in [July 2021](#).

The most recent PSB cycle has seen some challenges but one of the undoubted strengths was the success of partnership working in managing and responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. The collaborative working and relationships that were forged in the PSB meant that response structures could quickly be mobilised and implemented to meet the challenges all partners faced, including using the community hubs and networks that were piloted through the Board.

The PSB has also strengthened its commitment to regional working, most noticeably in terms of social prescribing, working within the Test, Trace, Protect regional structures and working with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES). The purpose of the project is to pursue progressive procurement, which help anchor institutions, such as public services, better achieve their core priorities.

The PSB work on prevention has also continued with the Early Years Vulnerability Profiling Model. The model aims to identify the individual level of need amongst families, including the investigation and removal of potential barriers to sharing information. These needs will be compared with the geographically based eligibility criteria for Flying Start support. The draft Vulnerability Profiling model is currently being finalised for piloting in RCT with a high significance placed on prevention and early identification with the focus on improved targeting of individuals in need of support including pre-conception and pregnancy.

The Future Generations Commissioner has also set out six areas of work that people across Wales have told her are the biggest challenges facing the country and where she could have the most impact. These areas are

1. [Skills](#) – our work includes helping people into work and better paid employment. For more information see [section 9 Prosperity](#).
2. [Housing](#) – our work includes increasing the number of quality homes available and affordable housing to provide greater housing choice for residents. For more information see [Section 9 Prosperity](#).

3. [Transport](#) - our work includes keeping the County Borough moving, including improvements to roads and pavements and public transport, whilst also improving air quality. For more information see [Section 8 Places](#).
4. [Land use planning and place making](#) – our work includes considering a radically different approach to mobility in the new Local Development Plan to create a socially just, zero-carbon mobility plan. This shifts mobility away from the car by eliminating the conditions that make cars necessary. For more information see [Section 9 Prosperity](#).
5. [Adverse childhood experiences \(ACEs\)](#) - our work includes helping children and young people and their families to cope with the difficulties they face including through our Resilient Families Service and providing work opportunities for young people leaving care. For more information see [Section 7 People](#) and the [Cwm Taf Public Services Board Report](#) July 2021.
6. [Health and Wellness system](#) our work includes introducing a social prescribing model for referring people to interventions in the community, including exercise classes, adult education classes, Digital Fridays, Library reading clubs etc. For more information see [Section 7 People](#).

You can give your thoughts and experiences on the Commissioner’s priorities on the [People’s Platform](#) and see the Commissioner’s first [Future Generations Report](#) published in May 2020. This report analyses the progress of all public bodies subject to the Act, including Welsh Government, in implementing the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act since it became law in 2015.

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## Some of the ways we are contributing to the 7 National Well-being Goals

National Well-being Goal	PEOPLE Ensuring people are independent, healthy and successful	PLACES Where people are proud to live, work and play	PROSPERITY Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, be entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper
Prosperous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting Children and Young People by giving them a great start in life through our <a href="#">Resilient families</a> programme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keeping people and traffic moving on well-maintained roads and pavements.</li> <li>Progressing schemes that will benefit communities now and in the future.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting businesses to adapt and diversify.</li> <li>Building new homes</li> <li>Supporting people to develop new skills.</li> <li><a href="#">Providing schools</a> where children can achieve the best they can.</li> </ul>
Resilient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reducing site disturbance and material waste with shorter construction schedules by using modular construction methods in the construction of our Extra Care facilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investing in and valuing our Green Spaces.</li> <li>Increasing <a href="#">flood alleviation</a> measures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting <a href="#">biodiversity</a> by protecting existing habitats where possible and creating new areas for wildlife on our school sites.</li> <li>Integrating biodiversity into planning arrangements.</li> </ul>
Healthier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helping people to stay as well as they can by encouraging increased activity in a setting that is right for the individual e.g. at home, in our <a href="#">leisure centres</a>, in our outdoor green spaces and in community facilities in schools.</li> <li>Supporting the roll out of Covid-19 vaccines and testing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progressing and maintaining <a href="#">Green Flag</a> status in our parks and sites.</li> <li>Re-opening our parks following flood repairs.</li> <li>Continuing to tackle environmental crime.</li> <li>Putting in place Walking Routes for residents and visitors and safe routes to school for children and young people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing well-being support to children and young people.</li> <li>Finding ways to protect air quality and promote health through active travel and local amenities when planning new developments.</li> </ul>
More Equal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making sure that residents can access services, no matter what their background or circumstances.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting national campaigns for Hate Crime Awareness.</li> <li>Making sure that our residents of all ages and abilities can enjoy our parks and green spaces through improved access and changing spaces.</li> <li>Ensuring <a href="#">domestic abuse support</a> is available to all that need it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Providing sanitary products</a> to help tackle period poverty for girls and women in our communities.</li> <li>loaning devices and mifi to children, young people and job seekers to help them continue education and training online.</li> <li>Freezing prices in Leisure Centres and minimal pricing in the Lido.</li> </ul>

National Well-being Goal	PEOPLE Ensuring people are independent, healthy and successful	PLACES Where people are proud to live, work and play	PROSPERITY Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, be entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper
Cohesive Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helping people to stay in their own homes for longer and enabling them to contribute to communities and strengthen social relationships.</li> <li>Continuing <a href="#">‘Food &amp; Fun’</a> during School holidays.</li> </ul>	Keeping people safe and helping them to feel safe by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>responding to community requests for action.</li> <li>tackling anti- social behaviour.</li> <li>Protecting those vulnerable to doorstep crime.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving housing for all our residents and creating pleasant neighbourhoods in which communities can thrive.</li> </ul>
Vibrant Culture & Welsh Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing and promoting more opportunities for our residents to communicate with the Council and each other in Welsh.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementing standardised place names in Welsh and English on all our new signage and correspondence, protecting Welsh heritage by preserving Welsh place names.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Celebrating the culture and history of the area in our theatres and parks and developing the <a href="#">Valleys Regional Park</a>.</li> <li>Promoting RCT as a visitor destination, including the Eisteddfod.</li> </ul>
Globally Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our work with <a href="#">PONT</a>, a volunteer-based charity organisation in RCT which is making a difference to lives in Mbale, Eastern Uganda and which aims to support Ugandan organisations who have the potential to tackle poverty in their towns and villages.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accelerating our recycling and reuse</li> <li>Progressing <a href="#">our plans to tackle and reduce the impact of Climate Change</a> throughout the Council’s services and the County Borough and to meet of 2030 targets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting Fair Trade Initiatives.</li> <li>Developing renewable energy projects like Taff’s Well Thermal Spring.</li> </ul>



## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CABINET

18<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021

### ENGAGEMENT ON THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET 2022/23

#### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION, CHRISTIAN HANAGAN IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, CLLR M WEBBER.

**Author:** Chris Davies, Corporate Policy & Consultation Manager

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform Cabinet of the proposed approach to resident engagement and consultation in respect of the 2022/23 budget setting process.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Support an online approach to the Council's budget consultation for 2022/23, using the Council's new Let's Talk Engagement website along with the re-introduction of some face-to-face events in the community. As part of the suggested approach, we will continue to provide alternative means of engagement for those having reduced or no access to the Internet and those who prefer to engage through traditional methods.
- 2.2 Support the Council's statutory requirements regarding consultation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax levels will be met via the proposed approach.
- 2.3 Support the budget consultation process taking place during the autumn of 2021, with the dates to be confirmed following clarification of the Welsh Government budget settlement timescales.

- 2.4 Authorise the Service Director – Democratic Services & Communications to plan the necessary timeline of engagement once the details of the Provisional Local Government Settlement are known, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member & Director of Finance & Digital Services.

### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To provide residents with the opportunity, via a range of methods, to provide feedback to the Cabinet on the 2022/23 budget setting process.

### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 In previous years the Council has undertaken a comprehensive approach to its annual budget consultation, involving a large number of residents and key stakeholders.
- 4.2 The approach has included a wide range of face-to-face events in the community across the County Borough, as well increased social media and digital engagement. Over 1,000 people were involved in last year's "digital by default" 2021/22 budget consultation process.
- 4.3 The widespread approach we use and the range of views we capture provides senior managers and Cabinet with the necessary information they need to inform budget setting for the year ahead. In addition, we have found that the information we collect is also valuable for service managers to use for their service planning and development.
- 4.4 The COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges it has brought have presented a unique set of circumstances for engagement and consultation. Face-to-face engagement is starting to return, with the relevant precautions in place.
- 4.5 The 2022/23 annual budget consultation will include a number of methods. We will continue to focus on a digital approach, using our new Let's Talk Engagement platform, that has been successfully introduced through our ongoing climate Change Conversation. We will also ensure that the engagement is inclusive for those having reduced or no access to the Internet and those who prefer to engage through traditional methods. We will re-introduce a number of face-to-face engagement events in the community.
- 4.6 It is therefore proposed that the approach outlined in section 5 below is utilised for the 2022/23 budget consultation process

## **5. PROPOSED ENGAGEMENT APPROACH**

- 5.1 The 2022/23 budget consultation will take place in 2 phases. The first phase will take place in the autumn of 2021 and will aim to collect views on investment priorities, council tax levels and efficiency savings. This will enable the Cabinet to consider the feedback received whilst developing a draft Budget Strategy for 2022/23. Phase 2 will take place early in the New Year and will engage with residents on this draft strategy. The specific dates are dependent on the release dates of the Welsh Government Settlement.
- 5.2 The approach will be mainly virtual through the Let's Talk online engagement platform, but will also include a number of face-to-face events and provide a number of alternative methods to ensure that it is inclusive of those who are not online or would rather provide their views in a different way;
- 5.3 The use of the Let's Talk platform, will provide a user friendly and interactive form of engagement. The "Let's Talk Budget" project will be able to provide key information, documents, graphics and videos to outline the background to the Council's budget, in addition to a number of engagement tools to allow feedback, which may include online polls, a survey, an interactive mapping tool, ideas and stories.
- 5.4 Social media will be used to communicate the key messages to residents and service users and encourage engagement and feedback regarding the Council's budget and investment areas.
- 5.5 An online survey will be developed on the Let's Talk site to collect responses on Council investments, Council Tax levels and the Council Tax Reduction scheme.
- 5.6 Emails will be distributed to all key stakeholders (including the Council's Citizens' Panel, Councillors, staff etc.).
- 5.7 A number of face-to-face engagement events will be planned, using the Council's recycling trailer, where we can outline the budget approach, answer questions and collect views. The events will allow the public to speak to Cabinet Members and senior officers about Council services and the budget in general.
- 5.8 Engagement will also take place with the following;
- Older people via the Older Persons Advisory Group meeting
  - Young people via Rhondda Cynon Taf's Youth Forums. (Instagram).

- A presentation and discussion with young people via our schools/colleges.
- Report and presentation to the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee and the School Budget Forum.
- A presentation at the Community Liaison Committee
- Disability forum engagement
- Armed Forces and Veterans Groups engagement.

5.9 As already stated it is important to continue to consider those having reduced or no access to the Internet and those who prefer to engage through traditional methods.

- A telephone Consultation option will be put in place, working with the Council's Contact Centre – The contact centre number will be made available for people to discuss their views or as a minimum to request consultation materials.
- Individual call backs if required. For example, some of the members of the Disability Forum have requested phone calls to provide their views on past consultations.
- Paper surveys and information available on request.
- Consultation freepost address for postal responses.
- Easy Read/Plan English Documents – These will still need to be produced and placed online as well as being available in paper copy on request.

5.10 In addition to the above, all members have had opportunity over recent months at Cabinet and through Full Council to engage in the ongoing work on the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements.

#### Council Tax, Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Investment Priorities

5.11 The proposed approach will ensure the Council's duty to consult regarding Council Tax and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme are met as well as providing residents and service users with the opportunity to feedback on the Council's investment priorities.

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

6.1 As noted in section 5, there will be a range of options for all to get involved in the budget consultation. The consultation will also involve the Council's Disability Forum.

6.2 The online Let's Talk platform is accessible on mobile phones and tablet devices, and residents without internet access or smart

phone/tablet devices can request a hard copy of the budget consultation questionnaire.

## **7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 All consultation materials and the Let's Talk platform will be bilingual.

## **8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

8.1 The recommendations outlined in the report seek to ensure a range of engagement opportunities are provided to residents and service users as part of the budget consultation process.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

9.1 There are no financial implications directly aligned to this report.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

10.1 The Council has a statutory duty to consult on Council Tax and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme which will be met under the approach to budget consultation outlined in this report.

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

11.1 The budget setting process clearly impacts on the delivery of all Council services and contributes in turn to the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan.

## **12. CONCLUSION**

12.1 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.

12.2 The COVID-19 pandemic brings challenges for public engagement and consultation, especially in Rhondda Cynon Taf where we have developed a very successful face to face approach with residents. We will be re-introducing some form of face-to-face engagement events, in addition to the new Let's Talk Engagement platform, which will allow residents to be more informed and engage more interactively.

12.3 The approach outlined seeks to continue our positive ongoing conversations, by ensuring that all residents and service users have every opportunity to provide feedback.

12.4 The results of the consultation will be presented to senior officers and Cabinet Members early in the new year to inform the construction of a proposed 2022/23 Revenue Budget Strategy.

**Other Information: -**

***Relevant Scrutiny Committee: Overview & Scrutiny & Finance and Performance***

***Contact Officer: Chris Davies***





## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 20/21**

**CABINET**

**18<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021**

### **UPDATE ON THE EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS AND PRUS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN  
DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (COUNCILLOR MRS J  
ROSSER)**

**Author(s): Tim Britton, Head of Achievement (Primary sector)  
Sarah Corcoran, Head of Achievement and Well-being (Secondary and  
All through sector)**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet with an overview of the progress Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority has made in relation to recommendations from the overarching thematic report Estyn published in January 2021.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Consider Estyn's letter on the Council's work to support schools to provide a quality provision during 2020-21.
- 2.2 Consider whether they require further information to be provided in any future meetings.

#### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To provide Members with an update on Estyn reviews of the critical actions taken by

the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate during 2020-21.

#### 4. **BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 During the early autumn term of 2020, the Welsh Government asked Estyn to undertake a review of local authorities' work in supporting their learning communities in schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) during the period from March to October 2020. Estyn's thematic report 'Local Authority and Regional Consortia Support for Schools and PRUs in Response to COVID-19' was published in January 2021.
- 4.2 The thematic review of practice across all 22 local authorities across Wales identified five recommendations for the Welsh Government to consider and recognised that a whole system approach was needed to address these. These recommendations are summarised as follows:
- **Recommendation 1:** Urgently address barriers to learning at home, particularly where this is due to a lack of access to suitable computers or adequate connectivity.
  - **Recommendation 2:** Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs.
  - **Recommendation 3:** Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals.
  - **Recommendation 4:** Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils.
  - **Recommendation 5:** Create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design.

The full report, can be accessed via the following link:

[Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 | Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#)

The first three recommendations were immediate and urgent in nature, whilst time would be needed to address the last two fully.

- 4.3 The report is based on virtual meetings with senior LA and Central South Consortium officers and the Cabinet Lead Member for Education and Inclusion Services; a meeting with the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council; and engagement calls with a significant number of schools and PRUs across the local authority.
- 4.4 Consideration was also given to supporting documentation and evidence provided to Estyn link inspectors by senior local authority officers and the feedback from surveys

of schools/PRU leaders, governors, teachers and support staff, parents and pupils during engagement visits throughout the autumn term.

## 5. **UPDATE/CURRENT POSITION**

In respect to the following five recommendations, Estyn identified many strengths as well as some areas of development.

### 5.1 **Recommendation 1:** Urgently address barriers to learning at home, particularly where this is due to a lack of access to suitable computers or adequate connectivity.

Estyn positively referenced the following:

- The local authority worked well with schools to identify further barriers to learning following on from the useful support provided during the early stages of the pandemic.
- Officers used data well to plan their approaches strategically, which included the data systems developed by the local authority to identify the exact needs of digitally excluded pupils to support better strategic planning and more targeted support.
- The Attendance and Wellbeing Service Officers, Family Engagement Officers and school staff supported families well by acting as a conduit between home and school to overcome barriers to learning.
- The local authority encouraged schools to adapt their offer and to take better account of the views of parents. In addition, the local authority communicated regularly with families to help parents and carers to support their children's learning.

### 5.2 **Recommendation 2:** Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs.

Estyn positively referenced the following:

- Officers from the local authority gathered a suitable range of first-hand evidence and listened to the views of parents and pupils, helping them to identify need and plan support accordingly. Estyn noted that schools reported they valued this approach and the support offered.
- The local authority and regional consortium worked closely to provide information and advice on distance and blended learning strategies.
- Over the course of the pandemic, the local authority has developed a useful tracking system to monitor pupil engagement.

### 5.3 **Recommendation 3:** Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals.

Estyn positively referenced the following:

- Effective use of digital technology and management information systems across the authority that has enabled data to be analysed to evaluate the progress and engagement of vulnerable groups of learners.
- The close working relationship between services and agencies to develop joint guidance to identify the best support for those most in need.
- The local authority has continued to support pupils' Welsh language skills by providing bilingual services and guidance for schools and families.

5.4 **Recommendation 4:** Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils.

Estyn positively referenced the following:

- The authority's awareness that the pandemic significantly impacted on the mental health of many groups of children and young people.
- The data team's support for schools to identify specific groups or cohorts of learners disproportionately affected by school closures.
- Staff in the Attendance and Wellbeing Service work with schools identifying wellbeing needs and supporting effective safeguarding of pupils.
- The authority has procured a software package to manage and record all safeguarding concerns across all schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- The development of the local authority data 'dashboard' to identify trends in safeguarding, and the work of Bronze command, giving a wider strategic view of safeguarding needs.
- The Education Psychology Service has established a helpline to support families, early years' settings, agencies, and schools.'

5.5 **Recommendation 5:** Create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design.

Estyn positively referenced the following:

- The local authority feels that partnership working with schools is strong. They consider that the local authority and schools are one team with shared aims and ambitions.
- Cross directorate working in Rhondda Cynon Taf has always been considered a positive feature by officers, and they now believe it has been further strengthened during the pandemic.

## 6. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not currently required - the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

## 7. **CONSULTATION**

7.1 There is no requirement to undertake any consultation.

## 8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

## 9. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

9.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

## 10. **LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP**

10.1 This is an information report presenting the overview of progress made by the local authority in relation to recommendations from the thematic report published in January 2021 by Estyn to Welsh Government which outlines how the Council is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report is clearly connected to one of the priorities in the Council's corporate plan 2020- 2024 that is:

- Creating **Places:** *where people are proud to live, work and play;*

Within this priority one of the Council's commitments is to ensure it has "*good schools so all children have access to a great education*".

## 11. **CONCLUSION**

11.1 It is hoped that the report provides Cabinet Members with details about the recent feedback provided by Estyn and insight into the progress the local authority has made against the recommendations made in Estyn's thematic report published January 2021.

11.2 The local authority will continue to work in close partnership with the regional School Improvement Service and all its schools to ensure that strong progress is made against all the recommendations identified by Estyn in the thematic report.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**18<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2021**

**UPDATE ON THE EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICE'S SUPPORT FOR  
SCHOOLS AND PRUS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN  
DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (COUNCILLOR MRS J  
ROSSER)**

**Background Papers: none**

**Officer(s) to contact:**

Tim Britton, Head of Achievement (Primary sector)

Sarah Corcoran, Head of Achievement and Well-being (Secondary and All through sector)

## APPENDIX 1:

**Estyn's overview of the progress made by Rhondda Cynon Taf in relation to recommendations from the overarching thematic report published January 2021. The detail is an extract from a letter to the Chief Executive of the Council.**

**Recommendation 1** – Urgently address barriers to learning at home, particularly where this is due to a lack of access to suitable computers or adequate connectivity.

The local authority conducted a stakeholder survey to identify all barriers to learning including digital concerns. They worked closely with schools to record details of the pupils in need of devices and distributed an additional 2,500 laptops and tablets to local families. Officers used data well to plan their approaches strategically. From their analyses, they observed that pupils eligible for free school meals make up only around half of the pupils that are digitally excluded. The data systems developed by the local authority identify the exact needs of digitally excluded pupils to support better strategic planning and more targeted support.

The attendance and wellbeing service officers, family engagement officers and school staff have supported families well be acting as a conduit between home and school to overcome barriers to learning. For example, they have delivered devices for families with transport issues, provided doorstep tuition on digital skills and techniques, reset passwords, and have helped families to understand how to use games consoles and tablets to access online learning platforms. In consultation with schools and in light of their experiences during the pandemic, the local authority is further developing their existing digital strategy. This will align with the Welsh Government's Hwb EdTech Infrastructure Project to provide a sustainable digital education infrastructure for the local authority.

Other than access to technology, officers identified the main barriers to learning to be the variability of engagement in live lessons and the fatigue of parents and pupils. They have encouraged schools to adapt their offer and to take better account of the views of parents. In addition, the local authority communicated regularly with families to help parents and carers to support their children's learning. They explained how they were supporting schools to work with families to provide a flexible approach to learning including consideration of the timing and number of live lessons. The local authority has also organised the deployment of teaching assistants to act as supportive adults for older pupils where appropriate.

**Recommendation 2** – Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs.

During the spring term 2021, local authority officers continued to work with the regional consortia and school leaders to review and refine distance and blended learning provision.

Improvement partners from the regional consortium used key questions to identify which schools were progressing well with blended and distance learning, and those that needed

additional support. Officers from the local authority also gathered a suitable range of first-hand evidence and listened to the views of parents and pupils. This helped them to identify need and plan support offered.

In addition to gathering first-hand evidence and returning more recently to work reviews and lesson observations, the local authority and regional consortium have used a wider range of approaches to gather evidence about the quality of blended learning from schools. For example, to evaluate the quality of distance learning and how responsive the school was to the needs and preferences of the pupils, improvement partners observed an online meeting with pupils at Penrhys Primary School. In addition, the improvement partner at Ysgol Nant Gwyn observed initial teacher education students talking about their experiences of contributing to a distance learning package for learners. The local authority considers learner voice to be a priority and even more so post Covid-19. At Maerdy Community Primary School the improvement partner hosted a virtual meeting with learners to evaluate learning.

The local authority and regional consortium have worked closely to provide information and advice on distance and blended learning strategies during the most recent lockdown period. Strengths of provision have been captured in a series of case studies and this has facilitated the sharing of good practice. In general, schools have valued the useful training opportunities and webinars provided by the regional consortium to help staff to develop further their approaches to blended learning. To support governors to improve the challenge they provide to schools about learners' distance learning experiences, the cluster of Welsh-medium schools held joint governor meetings and engaged governors in an example live lesson. This helped governors to understand the logistics of online teaching and be better informed when making decisions.

Over the course of the pandemic, the local authority has developed a useful tracking system to monitor pupil engagement. Engagement measures have been further refined to include the quality of the work, as well as the completion of tasks. In addition, schools are supported well to make effective use of the family engagement officers.

**Recommendation 3** – Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free schools meals.

Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority has developed its systems to capture and use data well during the past year. Local authority officers have collected information from a varied range of sources to help identify vulnerable pupils that have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. The effective use of digital technology and management information systems across the authority has enabled data to be analysed to evaluate the progress and engagement of vulnerable groups of learners. Officers have worked closely with children's services and the health board to develop joint guidance to identify the best support for those most in need. This guidance, along with the up-to-date pupil information provided to schools, has helped to ensure targeted and swift support has been in place.



To support schools with the use of the additional funding for pupils whose skills development has been affected by the pandemic, the local authority and regional consortium has put in place a range of professional learning opportunities and guidance. This includes the sharing of good practice, webinars, repositories of resources, and school-to-school support. In addition, the heads of department network meetings for secondary schools have continued to ensure that support at middle leader level focuses appropriately on identifying and addressing skills' deficit. School leaders have reported to officers and to Estyn during engagement calls that although reading skills have been maintained overall, pupils' listening and speaking skills and basic number skills have generally regressed. In addition, some schools feel that there has been a deterioration in pupils' levels of concentration and physical fitness. In order to improve pupils' literacy skills, the local authority has begun to develop school and cluster-based groups to consider how best to progress these skills. Although at an early stage, these groups are jointly developing research-informed initiatives aimed at improving outcomes in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The local authority has continued to support pupils' Welsh language by providing bilingual services and guidance for schools and families. All social media posts and graphics are also issued bilingually. In addition, they are increasing the capacity for Welsh-medium education within the authority as part of their longer-term strategic planning.

**Recommendation 4** – Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils.

The authority is aware that the pandemic has had a significant impact on the mental health of any groups of children and young people. For example, they recognise that post-16 learners' engagement and attendance is a cause for concern. As a result, their well-being action plan aims to build capacity of schools to meet the emotion and mental health and well-being needs of learners. Whole school training in approaches to anxiety, cognitive behaviour therapy, and staff well-being has been developed and accessed widely by practitioners.

Schools are supported by the data team to identify specific groups or cohorts of learners that have been disproportionately affected by school closures. For instance, they provide regular updated local authority reports and live data on vulnerable groups. The vulnerable groups include those pupils on the child protection register, children in need of care and support, young carers, children who are looked after and those with statements of special educational needs. The accessibility of data ensures that schools are informed quickly of learners whose personal circumstances have been challenging and may have changed. This, in turn, triggers enhanced well-being calls by the school and, where necessary, access to specialist services and support, such as the Attendance and Well-being Service, Youth Engagement and Participation Service, Resilient Families Service and the Educational Psychology Service.

Staff in the Attendance and Well-being Service work with schools on a rota basis to ascertain wellbeing needs and to support the effective safeguarding of pupils. They refer learners and families directly to the most appropriate service area. In addition, the authority has

procured a software package to manage and record all safeguarding concerns across all schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf. This, in conjunction with the further development of the local authority data 'dashboard' which identifies the trends in safeguarding, and the work of Bronze command (the multi-agency safeguarding group), gives a wider strategic view of safeguarding needs within the local authority.

The Education Psychology Service has established a helpline to support families, early years' settings, agencies and schools. The helpline has supported over 300 families during the first and second lockdowns and continues to be used widely. General themes that have emerged recently relate to anxiety due to lockdown, an increase in challenging behaviour at home, concerns regarding school transition and advice to support pupils who have experienced bereavement during lockdown. In addition, training has been provided for schools to establish a general measure of well-being for pupils and staff. This is enabling schools to identify trends and respond to specific well-being needs of individual pupils and classes or to respond to whole-school issues.

A number of multi-agency working groups have been established to support the well-being of particular groups of people. For example, Black, Asian and minority ethnic, LGBTQ+ and wellbeing of these groups will be evaluated as they become more established.

As restrictions have eased, the local authority has tried to ensure that pupils are offered food of the correct nutritional value. Breakfast clubs are operating and generally schools have changed their menus to encourage healthy eating.

**Recommendation 5** - Create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design.

Officers' report that the changes brought about by the pandemic have made them reflect on their practices and ways of working. They feel that there are many features that they will continue to implement in the future. For example, they intend to continue with the improvements to work digitally across the local authority, within schools, and between them, and ensure this is embedded in day to day practice.

The local authority feels that partnership working with schools is strong. They consider that the local authority and schools are one team with shared aims and ambitions. Generally, schools agree. School leaders report that they are happy to contact the local authority officers to seek advice. In addition, the local authority is more confident to seek feedback about their services from all stakeholders.

Cross directorate working in Rhondda Cynon Taf has always been considered a positive feature by officers, and they now believe it has been further strengthened during the pandemic. For example, the head of Human Resources and the Director of Public Health and Protection have attended headteacher meetings. This facilitated joint problem-solving and the co-construction of solutions to challenges posed by the pandemic. This supported timely decisions with fewer misunderstandings between schools and the local authority.

The local authority feels that a strength of its team throughout the pandemic is the quality and frequency of its communications with schools and the wider community. Leaders feel that the use of social media to communicate with stakeholders has been strong. Although the use of data is viewed as a strength of the local authority, officers intend to improve the way that this is shared. For example, they plan to share it via the local authority website. They feel this will make it easier for parents to find the additional information.

Opportunities for governors to engage with training has improved during the pandemic. Distance learning modules were offered on topics such as the Curriculum for Wales, additional learning needs and paediatric first aid. This, along with regular termly meetings to consider high level priorities, has resulted in a larger number of governors accessing training and improving the way they work. The local authority will continue to offer a hybrid approach to governor training in the future.

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