



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

**A Hybrid meeting of the CABINET will be held
Monday, 21st March, 2022 at 10.00 am**

Contact: Sarah Daniel - Council Business Unit

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, 17 March 2022 Councillors and Members of the public should stipulate if this address will be in the medium of English or Welsh.

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

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

Note:

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

2. MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on the 28th February 2022 as an accurate record.

(Pages 5 - 12)

3. DRAFT PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2021/24

To receive the report of the Director of Human Resources in respect of the updated Procurement Strategy 2021/24.

(Pages 13 - 30)

**4. HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORTATION AND STRATEGIC PROJECTS
SUPPLEMENTARY CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23**

To receive the report of the Director of Frontline Services in respect of the Supplementary Capital Programme for Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects.

(Pages 31 - 62)

5. ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT 2020/2021

To receive the Joint report of the Director of Human Resources and Service Director Democratic Services and Communications in respect of Council's Annual Equality Report, for the year 2020/21.

(Pages 63 - 150)

6. BITC RACE AT WORK CHARTER

To receive the report of the Director of Human Resources in respect of the Business In Community's (BITC) Race at Work Charter.

(Pages 151 - 154)

**7. EDUCATION & INCLUSION SERVICES PLANNED CAPITAL
PROGRAMME 2022/23**

To receive the report of the Director of Education and Inclusion Services in respect of the capital works for approval for 2022/23, as part of the Council's three-year Capital Programme.

(Pages 155 - 168)

**8. CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL TO ENHANCE WELSH
MEDIUM LEARNING SUPPORT CLASS PROVISION FOR PUPILS
WITH SIGNIFICANT ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS**

To receive the report of the Director of Education and Inclusion Services regarding the outcome of the recent consultation in respect of the proposal to enhance Welsh medium Learning Support Class (LSC) provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

(Pages 169 - 200)

**9. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME - CONSULTATION ON A
PROPOSAL TO CREATE A NEW COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL
IN GLYNCOCH**

To receive the report of the Director of Education and Inclusion Services regarding recent consultation undertaken in respect of the proposal to amalgamate Cefn Primary and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools.

(Pages 201 - 240)

**10. NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR ADOPTION
AND FOSTERING SERVICES**

To receive the report of the Group Director, Community and Children's Services in respect of the proposals for developing the governance and enabling for the National Adoption Service for Wales as it assumes responsibility for Foster Wales.

(Pages 241 - 306)

11. RCT LIBRARY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2022/25

To receive the report of the Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services in respect of the Draft Strategy for Rhondda Cynon Taf's Library Service and its associated Action Plan.

(Pages 307 - 346)

12. DIGITAL STRATEGY

To receive the report of Director of Finance and Digital Services in respect of the Council's updated Digital Strategy for the period 2022 to 2026.

(Pages 347 - 410)

13. QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT

To receive the report of the Director of Finance and Digital Services in respect of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective, based on the first nine months of this financial year (to the 31st December 2021).

(Pages 411 - 438)

14. EDINBURGH DECLARATION

To receive the report of the Director Public Health, Protection and Community Services in respect of the Edinburgh Declaration and the role of Local Authorities within the post-2020 global biodiversity framework - ensuring transformative change for nature over the coming decade.

(Pages 439 - 446)

15. UPDATE REPORT ON THE PROPOSED SOLAR FARM AND RELATED ISSUES

The purpose of the report is to provide a further update to Members with regards to the work underway in the development of a 'Land Based Solar Farm',

(Pages 447 - 452)

16. 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 J Bonetto
Councillor G Caple
Councillor A Crimmings
Councillor R Lewis
Councillor C Leyshon
Councillor M Norris

Officers:

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



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET

Minutes of the Hybrid meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 28 February 2022 at 12.00 pm

County Borough Councillors - Cabinet Members in attendance:- Chamber:

Councillor A Morgan (Chair)

Councillor M Webber
Councillor C Leyshon
Councillor M Norris

Councillor R Bevan
Councillor G Caple

Virtual:

Councillor R Lewis
Councillor A Crimmings

Councillor J Bonetto

Others in attendance

Councillor P Jarman

Officers in attendance

Chamber:

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director Democratic Services and Communications
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr D James, Service Director Prosperity and Development

Virtual:

Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Ms L Davies, Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Mr R Waters, Service Director – Frontline Services
Ms A Richards, Service Director 21st Century Schools and Transformation
Ms J Parry, Trading Standards and Registrar Service Manager

110 Declaration of Interest

Cllr R Bevan declared a personal interest in item 3 as he has a family member who works for the Authority but has been granted dispensation from the Standards Committee

Cllr M Webber declared a personal interest in item 7 as a governor on the interim governing body for the new welsh medium primary school in Rhydfelin.

111 MINUTES

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 27th January 2022 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

112 COUNCIL FEES AND CHARGES POLICY 2022/23

The Director Finance and Digital Services presented the report to Members which set out Proposed revisions to Council fees and charges levels for the financial year 2022/23 (all to be effective from 1st April 2022 or as soon as is practicable thereafter); and also details of fees and charges decisions previously approved and included in the 2022/23 proposed Budget Strategy.

He continued that it was a requirement to agree the Council's fees and charges for 2022/23, as part of the annual budget setting process.

He advised Cabinet that the outcome of Cabinet's review is a proposed 2.50% standard increase to fees and, with the Council absorbing the implications of not applying a standard uplift in line with the CPI rate of inflation. In addition, a number of areas are proposed to be subject to specific treatment, as set out in the report. He added that the impact of the proposals set out in Table 1 of the report would reduce income by £45k in a full year (compared to the Council's budget modelling for 2022/23). In addition, a number of fees and charges decisions have previously been approved and accordingly have already been incorporated into the Council's 2022/23 proposed Budget Strategy.

Cllr M Norris agreed that the proposal to protect a wide range of areas from cost increases were recognition of the rising cost of living faced by all residents. He added that the last consultation feedback that lots of residents had asked for pest control to be frozen so Cabinet have listened and this forms part of the proposal.

The Deputy Leader spoke positively of the proposals and stated that she was very supportive of the proposals outlined in the report

At this juncture in the meeting and with agreement of the Leader, Councillor P Jarman addressed the Committee on this item to which the Leader responded too.

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications confirmed that as the matter is for determination at Council, the report is exempt from call-in procedures.

Following discussion it was agreed:

1. To approve the proposed revised levels for all areas of the Council's fees and charges as set out at section 5 and detailed at Appendix 1 of the report
2. Subject to 1 above being agreed, to build the net budgetary impact (£45k for 2022/23) into the budget strategy proposals for consideration by Cabinet and Council as appropriate (paragraph 5.3).

3. To note the fees and charges decisions previously approved and included in the 2022/23 proposed Budget Strategy (paragraph 5.4 / Table 2).

113 THE COUNCIL'S 2022/23 REVENUE BUDGET

The Director Finance and Digital Services presented the report to members on the draft budget proposals for the 2022/23 revenue budget strategy. The proposals have now been consulted upon as part of a second phase of budget consultation and the results are now available for Cabinet to consider and amend as necessary the draft budget strategy which they would wish to recommend to Council.

The Director continued that for 2022/23, the full proposals detailed in the report are recommended to Council. The reserve currently stands at £4.607M, having been replenished during this year (2021/22) by £0.988M to quarter 2. Accordingly, to address the remaining budget gap, it is proposed that an allocation of £0.971M is made from this reserve for 2022/23. This would facilitate a balanced budget for 2022/23 and would leave £3.636M in the reserve

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services spoke positively of the proposals and stated that a great deal of good work had been undertaken to achieve an ambitious programme for the next period. He continued the budget needs to be balanced against the rising cost pressures and urged caution going forward.

The Deputy Leader commented that the proposals were also in line with the budget consultation where over 80% of respondents are in support of a 1% Council Tax rise.

The Cabinet Member Adult Services welcomed the additional £1.5m funding for adult social care which will go towards supporting the Health and Social Care sector who are under financial pressures.

The Cabinet Member Education and Inclusion was pleased to see schools are viewed as a key priority and the proposed budget increase is to cover an increase in staff, additional learning needs and energy costs.

The Leader spoke positively of the areas due to receive investment and is particularly pleased that the proposals included an increase to a minimum of £10 an hour pay increase which included all Health and Social Care staff. He assured that discussions with the sector that all staff benefit from the offer to support the recruitment and retention of staff

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications confirmed the report is exempt from call-in procedures as the matter will be presented to Council on 9th March for approval.

Following discussions it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. To review their Budget Strategy which they wish to recommend to Council on the 9th March 2022; and
2. To authorise the Director of Finance and Digital Services to amend

the level of contribution from the Medium Term Financial Planning and Service Transformation Reserve as a consequence of any change to the Council's resource levels announced in the Final Local Government Settlement.

114 THE COUNCIL'S CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23 – 2024/25

The Director Finance and Digital Services presented the report to Member on the three year capital programme which includes:

- A proposed reallocation of existing resources, and allocation of new resources as detailed in paragraph 5 of the report;
- Proposed investment priorities as detailed in paragraph 6.2 of the report;
- The Council's core capital programme;
- The Council's total capital programme including additional non-core funding.

The Leader spoke positively at the proposals and commented that the additional investment areas were all linked to Corporate Plan and will save revenue in the future. He added the proposals were well received by the public through the consultation process.

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications confirmed that the report was exempt from call in procedures as the report would be determined at Council on 9th March 2022

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED:**

1. To authorise the Director of Finance and Digital Services to amend the level of Council Resources required to fund the Core Three Year Capital Programme as shown at Appendix 2 as a consequence of any change to the Council's capital resource levels announced in the Final Local Government Settlement.

115 LOCAL BUSINESS RATE REDUCTION SCHEME 2022/23

The Head of Revenue and Benefits presented Cabinet with details of a proposed local Business Rate Reduction Scheme for Rhondda Cynon Taf and an update on the continuation of the Welsh Government Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief (RLH) Scheme for 2022/23. The proposals provided ongoing support to RLH businesses within Rhondda Cynon Taf following two years of restricted trading through the period of the COVID 19 pandemic.

The Head of Service continued that the adoption of the WG RLH Rate Relief Scheme and the Local Discretionary Business Rates Relief Scheme will provide further much needed financial support for local businesses to meet their 2022/23 rate liability and forms part of a wider package of support intended to create and maintain vibrant town centres across Rhondda Cynon Taf, which is something that this Council has committed to in its Corporate Plan.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services was pleased to add to the support

available for business and also to other sectors that are included in the scheme and is great news for businesses.

The Service Director Democratic Services confirmed the report was exempt from call in procedures

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the changes to the Welsh Government RLH Scheme for the year 2022/23;
2. Adopt the Welsh Government RLH Scheme for the year for 2022/23; and
3. The proposed local Business Rate Reduction Scheme for 2022/23 which will be incorporated into the Council's Revenue Budget Strategy.

116 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING (FORMERLY 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS) CAPITAL PROGRAMME - NEW WELSH MEDIUM PRIMARY SCHOOL IN RHYDYFELIN

The Service Director Finance and Digital Services provided an update regarding financing of the proposals to build a new Welsh Medium Primary School in Rhydyfelin. The investment in a new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin can be financed by Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B grant and by borrowing for the Council's contribution by the use of powers available under the Prudential Code

The Deputy Leader spoke positively of the plans of the new state of the art welsh medium school now becoming a reality following a number of delays in the process due to the pandemic.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the position, as set out in the report on the submission of a full business case to Welsh Government in respect of a new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin;
2. To review and agree the updated total costs and funding package for the school; and
3. To review, and if acceptable propose that the Prudential Borrowing report attached at Appendix A to the report is presented to Council on 9th March 2022.

117 PONTYPRIDD PLACEMAKING PLAN

The Service Director Prosperity and Development presented the report to members which set out the draft Placemaking Plan for Pontypridd Town Centre. The report provides a bold vision for the regeneration of the town. He continued that 'Placemaking' is an overarching approach to improving how a place looks, functions and is experienced. The draft Placemaking Plan for Pontypridd Town Centre seeks to replace the existing Regeneration Framework for Pontypridd (2017-2022) building upon the foundations of what has already been delivered and

to provide a framework for delivering further new development and investment that can help improve the prosperity of Pontypridd, enhance the townscape and make it more resilient to future change.

The Cabinet Member Bevan Enterprise Development and Housing commented that the proposals in the report demonstrates the Council's commitment to the development of Pontypridd and noted that £167m had been invested in the area in recent years. He looked forward to receiving feedback from the consultation process.

The Deputy Leader agreed and commented that the development of the Lido, YMCA and the Muni over the last few years demonstrates this Council's level of commitment and investment in this ward.

Following discussions it was **RESOLVED:**

To consider the draft Pontypridd Placemaking Plan and agreed to consultation and public engagement on the overarching Pontypridd Placemaking Plan including engagement on early ideas for the former Marks & Spencer /Dorothy Perkins/Burtons area;

To receive a further report detailing the results from the consultation exercise;

That in addition to consulting on the Placemaking plan, agree to a funding application being submitted to Welsh Government to demolish the vacant Marks & Spencer/Dorothy Perkins/Burtons buildings due to their dilapidated and structural state and general poor quality and to commence the demolition process if and when funding is in place and on the securing of any necessary statutory consents

That in addition to consulting on the Placemaking plan, agree to move to the formal procurement stage to secure a development partner to deliver a hotel on the site of the former Bingo Hall/High Street/Sardis Road.

118 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA) USE OF RIPA IN 2020-21 BY RCTCBC

The Trading Standards & Registrar Services Manager presented the report to members. Acknowledge that investigatory powers in respect of covert surveillance and acquisition of communications data have been used in an appropriate manner that is consistent with the Council's RIPA and IPA policies during the period 1st January – 31st December 2021.

Members were informed that during the period 1st January – 31st December 2021 there were no authorisations in respect of directed surveillance. During the same period, there were no authorisations for the use of covert human intelligence sources.

The Deputy Leader thanked officers for the report which ensures we are using RIPA in an appropriate manner. She added it is a useful tool in flytipping and rogue trader incidences.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED:**

To note and acknowledge that investigatory powers in respect of covert surveillance and acquisition of communications data have been used in an appropriate manner that is consistent with the Council's RIPA and IPA policies during the period 1st January – 31st December 2021.

119 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".

120 ACQUISITION OF 103-110 TAFF STREET, PONTYPRIDD, CF37 4SL AND 13-17 SARDIS ROAD, PONTYPRIDD, CF37 1DX

The Director Corporate Estates presented the report which set out the proposal to acquire ownership of key properties to provide the Council with control of the land and buildings along the main retail area of Taff Street, Pontypridd, to be incorporated into a town centre regeneration scheme development, which will have significant tangible benefits to the town and surrounding area.

To seek authority to acquire the Freehold interest of existing properties known as 103-110 Taff Street, Pontypridd and 13-17 Sardis Road, Pontypridd which are located in a key position in a main retail location, part of which is subject to long leasehold interests.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED:**

To approve the purchase of the Freehold interest of 103-110 Taff Street, Pontypridd and 13-17 Sardis Road, Pontypridd and the leaseholds of 105-106 Taff Street, Pontypridd of for a sum of £2.412M.

121 URGENT ITEMS

None

This meeting closed at 12.55 pm

**Cllr A Morgan
Chairman.**

This page is intentionally left blank



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21st March 2022

DRAFT PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2021/24

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN CONSULTATION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES – CLLR MARK NORRIS

Author: Marc Crumie – Head of Procurement

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to:

- 1.1 Provide a copy of the updated Procurement Strategy 2021/24 for review, comment and endorsement.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Endorse the Strategy and be satisfied with that the direction of travel for the Procurement Service.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The ways in which local government organisations procure is changing. Whereas previously there may have been a focus on procurement delivering financial savings, there is now a shift away from the traditional price and quality evaluation towards also ensuring that economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being outcomes are considered for each procurement process. Being a public sector organisation will demand that we continue to be prudent, we must therefore look to deliver value for money but also now seek to ensure that we are delivering sustainable outcomes that benefit the communities we serve.
- 3.2 The procurement duties contained within the Draft Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill begin with an overarching duty on contracting authorities to seek to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of their areas by carrying out public procurement in a socially

responsible way. This means taking action to achieve the well-being goals and the fair work goal (*together, the 'socially responsible procurement goals'*).

3.3 Whilst ensuring that all the work that we do supports the Council's well-being objectives as set out within its Corporate Plan 2020/24, there is also a clear ambition to support the net zero ambitions of the Council.

3.4 The Procurement Strategy provided at Appendix A of this report has been completed and takes into account the new and emerging areas that the procurement process has been tasked with helping to deliver.

4. THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF THE PROCUREMENT SERVICE

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

4.1 A new Procurement Strategy 2021/24 has been drafted, and lists the following strategic themes:

THEME 1 – Ensuring we have effective governance arrangements in place that support robust commissioning and procurement decisions:

- Reviewing our standard documents to ensure they are fit for purpose and address key/current priorities.
- Ensure arrangements are embedded to implement the requirements in respect of Prescribed Contracts.
- Ensuring that the Welsh language continues to be applied throughout our processes.
- Ensure our data adds value to the procurement process.
- Put in place monitoring arrangements whereby outcomes are tracked, monitored, and reported efficiently.
 - Build the arrangements that will need to be in place to deliver an annual report that complies with the requirements placed upon us by the draft Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill.
- Review our Internet and Intranet content to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- Ensure that the Contract Procedure Rules are reviewed and updated regularly and complied with across the organisation.
- Learning and development of Procurement staff and wider staff across the Council to ensure upskilling in commercial awareness and understanding and implementing new policies, procedures and regulations.

THEME 2 – Putting in place socially responsible procurement activities and processes that will help the Council to:

- Taking action to reduce the Council's carbon footprint associated with procured goods and services.
- Reducing the Council's use of single use plastics.
- Support the Council's initiative to have in place a fleet of Ultra Low Emitting Vehicles (ULEV's).

- Procuring locally.
- Embed ethical and fair work arrangements into our contracting processes and supply chains.
- Develop arrangements whereby the social value obtained from each contracting arrangement is maximised.

THEME 3 – For all relevant contracts, ensuring that suppliers are held to account by putting in place robust contract management arrangements, where:

- Performance is monitored, tracked and reported against the intended outcomes of the contract.
- Arrangements are in place whereby escalations in respect of performance and contract compliance can be dealt with in a fair and transparent manner.
- Contracts and contract management activities are recorded on a centrally managed system, where performance and outcomes can be tracked.

4.2 A detailed action plan accompanies the Strategy. The Action Plan will be used to track and report progress, it is a 'live' document and will be updated when new actions arise.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

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

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no Welsh Language implications as a result of the recommendations set out in this report.

7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

7.1 There are no consultation requirements emanating from the recommendations set out in the report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 Currently, there are no direct financial implications as a result of the recommendations provided within this report, but it must be noted that financial implications will likely become apparent when new initiatives are implemented – implementing carbon reducing measures across our supplychains for example.

8.2 At this stage we have no tangible method to estimate this impact.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 There are no legal or legislative implications emanating from the recommendations set out in the report.

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

10.1 The draft Procurement Strategy sets the vision for the Council's commissioning, procurement, and contract management activities over the short, medium and long term. By setting this out, it aims to demonstrate how the Council will deliver its social responsibilities as set out within the Draft Bill, support the delivery of the Council's Well-being priorities, and in doing so demonstrate how the Council contributes to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 seven national wellbeing goals when it procures.

11. CONCLUSION

10.1 The priorities for the Procurement Service have changed significantly over recent years, external drivers clearly place expectations on the procurement process to deliver change in respect of demonstrating outcomes, delivering social value and helping organisations to tackle climate change.

10.2 The Procurement Strategy sets the scene, identifies the areas that require action and includes a detailed action plan that sets out how we plan to implement.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET
21st March 2022
DRAFT PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2021/24

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN CONSULTATION
WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES – CLLR MARK
NORRIS**

Background Papers:
None

Officer to contact:
Marc Crumbie – Head of Procurement



APPENDIX A – DRAFT STRATEGY

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

**Commissioning, Socially Responsible
Procurement & Contract Management
Strategy 2021-2024**

March 2022

Foreword

The consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic have been truly profound for our economy, our society, and our communities. With this backdrop, together with the continued uncertainty of the long-term impacts of the UK's departure from the EU, we must ensure public sector expenditure delivers even greater value in contributing to positive social, economic, environmental and cultural outcomes. Effective, sustainable procurement, and the successful delivery of contracts in respect of works, goods and services we all rely on has never been more important.

The ways in which local government organisations procure is evolving. Whereas previously there may have been a particular focus on looking towards procurement to deliver financial savings, there is now a shift away from the traditional 'price and quality evaluation' towards also ensuring that economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being outcomes are considered for each procurement process. Being a Local Authority will demand that we continue to be prudent with public funds and therefore look to achieve 'value for money', but also now seek to include broader factors that support delivery of sustainable outcomes that benefit the communities we serve.

The procurement duties contained within the Draft Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill begin with an overarching duty on contracting authorities to seek to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of their areas by carrying out public procurement in a socially responsible way. This means taking action to achieve the well-being goals and the fair work goal (together, the 'socially responsible procurement goals').

The expectations contained within the Draft Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill are consistent with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

This Strategy pulls together all of the diverse workstreams that filter through the Service, into one central place – to identify them, demonstrate how they link together and evidence how they will be delivered and monitored by a clear delivery plan.

This is a strategic document that sets the vision for the Council's commissioning, procurement, and contract management activities over the short, medium and long term. Its primary aims are to demonstrate how the Council:

- will deliver its social responsibilities as set out within the Draft Bill, support the delivery of the Council's Well-being priorities,
- contributes to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 seven national wellbeing goals when it procures.

Cllr Mark Norris
Cabinet Member for Corporate Services

1. INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

- 1.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Council currently spends in the region of £250 million a year with private and third sector organisations on the goods, services and works needed to deliver public services. It is the Council's responsibility to manage this money efficiently and effectively in support of the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities and in accordance with the Regulatory Framework including the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended).
- 1.2 The **purpose** of this strategy is to set out how we are changing commissioning and procurement within the Council, to enhance our contract management arrangements and set out the vision and strategic direction necessary to deliver better outcomes for our communities.
- 1.3 This strategy is aimed at promoting effective commissioning, procurement and contract management across the whole organisation.
- 1.4 The **aims** of this strategy are to:
- Establish a clear strategic direction and priorities for change.
 - Clearly set out what we are going to do and why.
 - Identify four Key themes to support the Council's delivery of its Corporate Plan 2020-2024, and the Council's ambitions to become net zero by 2030.
- 1.5 The strategy has been developed with a full appreciation of the complex regulatory framework within which commissioning and procurement operates. It also recognises that it is an area with high risks – with potentially significant impacts on service delivery, financial management and legal compliance, as well as the overall reputation of the Council.

DEFINITIONS

- 1.6 To be clear from the outset of what the Council means when discussing the three disciplines described within this strategy, the definitions are as follows:

Definition of commissioning:

Commissioning is a set of activities by which the Council ensures that services are planned and organised to best meet the needs and demands of our communities and citizens to deliver appropriate and sustainable outcomes for now and for future generations.

It involves understanding the population need, best practice, local resources, assessing alternative delivery models and using these to plan, implement and review changes in services.

Definition of socially responsible procurement

Socially responsible public procurement is taking action when purchasing goods, services and works to achieve value for money in accordance with the principles of openness, transparency and equal treatment. Key objectives include supporting the well-being goals, and the new fair work goal, in order to improve economic, social,

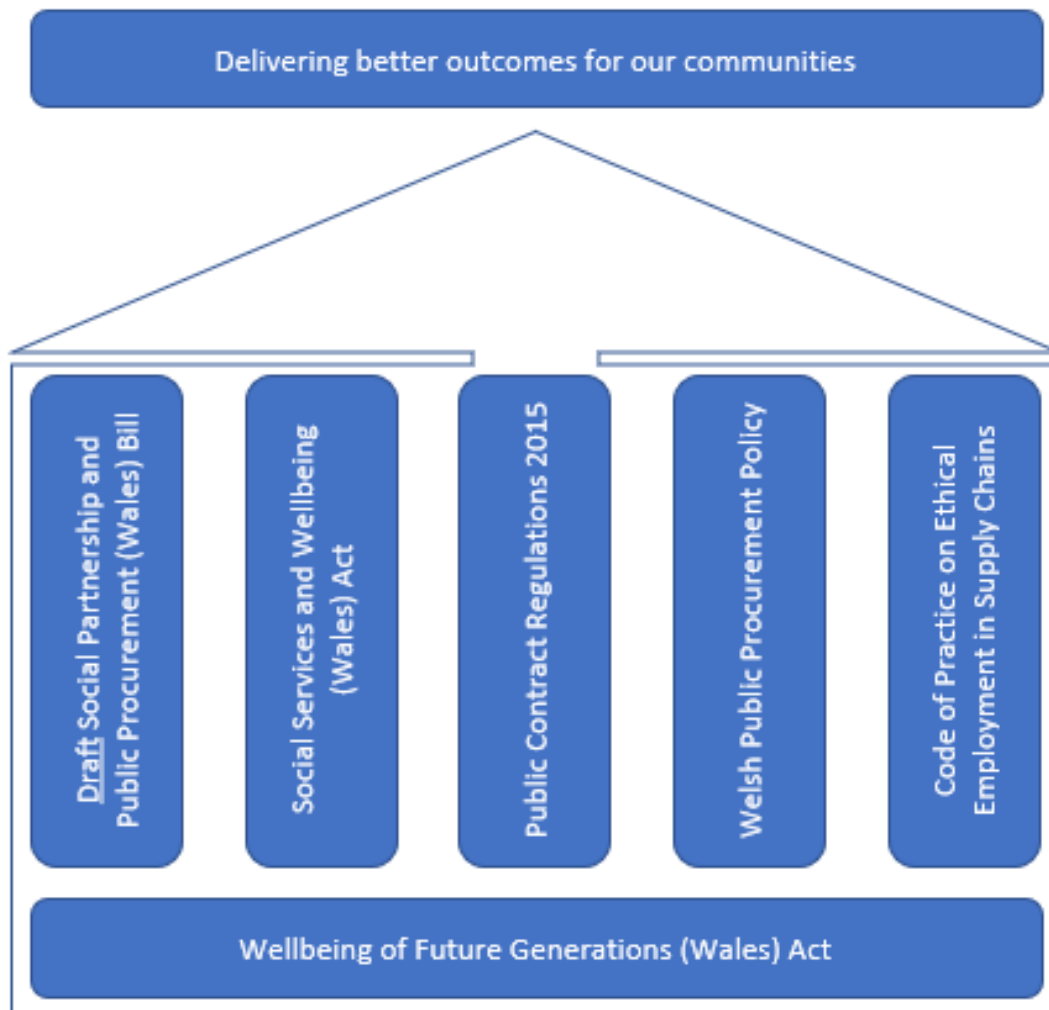
environmental and cultural well-being. These matters must be considered throughout the procurement and contract management processes.

Definition of contract management

Contract management relates to the ongoing management and monitoring of contracts entered into with providers for works, goods or services. Contract management focuses on ensuring compliance with the terms and conditions, delivery in line with the service specification and monitoring the delivery of defined outcomes as well as documenting and agreeing on any changes or amendments that may arise during its implementation, execution throughout the lifetime of the contract.

2. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK / THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 2.1 Commissioning and procuring in the public sector in Wales is structured around a regulatory and policy framework that aim to deliver outcomes that have been procured with openness, fairness and transparency that deliver the maximum economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being benefits to individuals and the local area.
- 2.2 To deliver these outcomes, it is essential that this Strategy combines all of these requirements into our key themes.
- 2.3 The Regulatory and Policy framework is summarised as follows:



2.4 Further details of each of the above areas is provided in Appendix A.

3. THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES AND WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES

3.1 The Council agreed its new corporate priorities and a new Corporate Plan for 2020-24, *'Making a Difference'* at its meeting on held on 4 March 2020. Council also agreed that these three corporate priorities would be the Council's Well-being objectives, which the Council is required to set by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

3.2 The Council's agreed Vision, purpose and priorities are:

Vision - *For Rhondda Cynon Taf to be the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy, and prosperous.*

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

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

The Council's Corporate Priorities and Well-being Objectives are:



- 3.3 In addition to setting out the 3 Priorities of People, Places and Prosperity, the Corporate Plan identifies one of the biggest challenges the Council faces:

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

HOW THE PROCUREMENT SERVICE WILL SUPPORT DELIVERY OF THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN

- 3.4 The following strategic themes have been put in place with the aim of setting out a framework that will enable a co-ordinated approach to delivering the work of the Procurement Service:

THEME 1 – Ensuring we have effective governance arrangements in place that support robust commissioning and procurement decisions:

- Reviewing our standard documents to ensure they are fit for purpose and address key/current priorities.
- Ensure arrangements are embedded to implement the requirements in respect of Prescribed Contracts.
- Ensuring that the Welsh language continues to be applied throughout our processes.
- Ensure our data adds value to the procurement process.
- Put in place monitoring arrangements whereby outcomes are tracked, monitored, and reported efficiently.
 - Build the arrangements that will need to be in place to deliver an annual report that complies with the requirements placed upon us by the draft Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill.
- Review our Internet and Intranet content to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- Ensure that the Contract Procedure Rules are reviewed and updated regularly and complied with across the organisation.

- Learning and development of Procurement staff and wider staff across the Council to ensure upskilling in commercial awareness and understanding and implementing new policies, procedures and regulations.

THEME 2 – Putting in place socially responsible procurement activities and processes that will help the Council to:

- Taking action to reduce the Council’s carbon footprint associated with procured goods and services.
- Reducing the Council’s use of single use plastics.
- Support the Council’s initiative to have in place a fleet of Ultra Low Emitting Vehicles (ULEV’s).
- Procuring locally.
- Embed ethical and fair work arrangements into our contracting processes and supply chains.
- Develop arrangements whereby the social value obtained from each contracting arrangement is maximised.

THEME 3 – For all relevant contracts, ensuring that suppliers are held to account by putting in place robust contract management arrangements, where:

- Performance is monitored, tracked and reported against the intended outcomes of the contract.
- Arrangements are in place whereby escalations in respect of performance and contract compliance can be dealt with in a fair and transparent manner.
- Contracts and contract management activities are recorded on a centrally managed system, where performance and outcomes can be tracked.

3.5 ***It is the intention that these strategic themes will demonstrate the alignment between the work that we deliver to the achievement of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being outcomes for the local community – benefits that will be delivered in the short, medium and long term.***

3.6 The strategic themes listed in section 3.4 of this strategy aim to support the Council’s delivery of its Corporate Plan 2020-2024, and the Council’s ambitions to become net zero by 2030.

3.7 In support of delivering the strategic themes of this Strategy, a delivery plan has been developed that sets out what will be achieved and by when.

4. MONITORING AND REPORTING

4.1 Our progress in respect of implementing the strategic themes will be monitored against the delivery plan.

4.2 In accordance with the requirement placed upon us by the **DRAFT** Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill, we will publish an annual report that will summarise the work delivered for each financial year. The report will be structured around:

- Giving a summary of the work delivered during the year.

- Identifying the changes made within our governance arrangements that help deliver consistency for the service and enable efficient and effective monitoring and reporting.
- Our progress against delivering our strategic themes.
- Demonstrate how the work delivered has contributed to the principle of achieving socially responsible public procurement (with examples that are linked to the Council's well-being objectives).
- A summary of the procurements during the year that led to the award of a Prescribed contract.
- Looking forwards – setting out what is to come.

4.3 This strategy will be reviewed at least annually and should revisions be required these will be actioned with a revised copy being published on our website as soon as reasonably practicable.

Appendix A – Regulatory Framework

Draft Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill

Social partnership brings together trade unions, employers and Government on areas of shared interest to identify and implement solutions that bring about better outcomes. The **draft** Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill is a key step towards the Welsh Government's vision of Wales being an inclusive nation with a vibrant economy that values and safeguards its workforce.

The draft Bill seeks to build on the work of the Fair Work Commission. The draft Bill sets out provisions to establish a system of fair work objectives to ensure a transparent and consistent approach to providing good and safe employment in Wales, working with trade union and employer social partners.

The draft Bill also sets out measures to ensure that public procurement is undertaken with consideration to social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being and to provide greater transparency and clarity by establishing socially responsible procurement objectives, in principle and practice, with a focus on outcomes. This is central to the Welsh Government's long-standing commitment to using the power of the public purse to bring about broader benefits to our communities, our workplaces, and our country.

The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act

The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (SSWB) is about changing the way people receive health and social care. In the same way as the Well-being of Future Generations Act, the SSWB Act aims to help people to avoid things getting worse and to become more resilient in dealing with their own problems.

For people who need health and social care, and their carers, the SSWB Act also aims to involve them more in their treatment, giving them more voice and control with regards to the services they receive.

The SSWB Act states that Local Authorities have a vital role to create the right environment through which people with an interest in the support of a population in a local area can come together to create the support that they need.

The role of Local Authorities should, therefore, include: creating an environment locally to promote user voice and control at every level; and raising awareness about the role that social enterprises, co-operatives, co-operative arrangements, user led services and the third sector can play in achieving the policy objectives of the Act.

This requires a more open approach to identifying common opportunities and flexible arrangements for planning, promoting and delivering services. Although this will be challenging in some services, this will place more emphasis on promoting the right balance of resource efficiency and community benefit.

Public Contracts Regulations (PCR's) 2015

Now that the UK has formally left the EU, the UK Government is developing a new set of Public Contract Regulations. The Welsh Government has confirmed that it will adopt these Procedures

rather than develop their own. It is anticipated that the new rules will come into force sometime during 2023, until that time the PCR's 2015 will continue to apply.

This legal framework requires contracting authorities to award contracts that are over a prescribed threshold in accordance with the principles of non-discrimination, equal treatment, openness, transparency, procedural fairness, mutual recognition and proportionality.

The Wales Procurement Policy Statement Principles

Updated and issued by the Welsh Government in March 2021, the purpose of this document is to set the strategic direction for public sector procurement in Wales.

The Welsh Government's vision is:

“Welsh public sector procurement is a powerful lever with ability to affect sustained change to achieve social, economic, environmental and cultural outcomes for the well-being of Wales”

The Welsh Government sets out the following ten principles for procuring well-being for Wales based on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act Goals and key Welsh Government policies:

1. We will leverage **collaborative** procurement activity in Wales to maximise **long-term** sustainable social and economic value outcomes from public spend
2. We will **integrate** procurement into the heart of Welsh policy development and implementation
3. We will progress **long-term** sustainable procurement, which builds on and scales best practice and sets clear steps that show how procurement is supporting the delivery of organisational well-being objectives
4. We will raise the **long-term** standing and profile of the procurement profession and its role as an enabler for procurement policy
5. We will support Welsh Government policy objectives relating to progressive procurement, such as the Foundational and Circular Economy, through **collaborative**, place-based (whether national, regional or local) procurement activity which nurtures resilient local supply chains
6. We will act to **prevent** climate change by prioritising carbon reduction and zero emissions through more responsible and sustainable procurement to deliver our ambition for a net zero public sector Wales by 2030
7. We will align our ways of working and increase stakeholder **involvement** to support innovative and sustainable solutions through procurement
8. We will **collaborate** with stakeholders to promote equal opportunities and fair work in Wales
9. We will improve the **integration** and user experience of our digital solutions and applications, maximising the use of our procurement data to support decision making
10. We will promote value-based procurement which delivers optimum **long-term** outcomes for Wales.

Ethical Employment in Supply Chains' Code of Practice

The 'Ethical Employment in Supply Chains' Code of Practice was launched in 2017 by the Welsh Government. It aims to support the development of more ethical supply chains delivering contracts for the Welsh public sector. All public sector organisations are encouraged to sign up to the Code and

businesses in public sector supply chains are encouraged to adopt it. The aim of the Code is to ensure that workers in public sector supply chains are employed ethically and in compliance with both the letter and spirit of UK, EU and international laws. The code has 12 commitments that are designed to eliminate modern slavery and support ethical employment practices.

The Council is committed to ensuring a high standard of ethical trade practices, across its procurement activities. In accordance with this Policy the Council will expect its suppliers, service providers and contractors to observe the policy's provisions and to demonstrate a similar commitment to an ongoing programme of ensuring and, where necessary, improving ethical practices locally and wider.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 underpins the governance arrangements of all public sector bodies in Wales. It states that public bodies are required to apply the principle of 'Sustainable Development', defined in the Act as the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. A public body must apply the sustainable development principle meaning that a body "***must act in manner that which seeks to ensure the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs***". In order to show they have applied the principle, public bodies need to apply the following five ways of working:

- **Involving** a diversity of the population in the decisions that affect them.
- Working with others in a **Collaborative** way to find shared sustainable solutions.
- Looking to the **Long-term** so that we do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their-own needs.
- Taking an **Integrated** approach so that public bodies look at all the well-being goals in deciding on their well-being objectives.
- Understanding the root causes of issues to **prevent** them from occurring.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 lists seven national Well-being Goals:

1. A prosperous Wales – *By taking steps to support and develop local business and providing opportunities for residents to secure jobs, experience or training.*
2. A More Equal Wales - *By taking steps to ensure that all residents have the opportunity benefit from the framework, irrespective of their background or circumstances*
3. Resilient Wales – By taking steps to ensure that all parts of the Council's supply chains minimise damage to environment including carbon reduction.
4. A Wales of Cohesive communities – By taking steps to maximise Community Benefits and increase local SMEs and opportunities for local work further contributing to communities
5. A Globally responsible Wales – By taking steps to raise awareness of global issues through contracts, e.g. Fair Trade goods and encouraging the next generation
6. A Healthier Wales – By taking steps to ensure that the physical and mental health of employees is integral to employees of supply chain companies
7. A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language – By taking steps to ensure the contribution of culture and the Welsh Language in is understood and valued and that business development includes a cultural offer

This page is intentionally left blank

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21st MARCH 2022

HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORTATION AND STRATEGIC PROJECTS SUPPLEMENTARY CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, CLLR A MORGAN

Author: Roger Waters, Director Frontline Services.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Further to the approval of the Council's Three-Year Capital Programme 2022/23 - 2024/25 on 9th March 2022 at Council, this report sets out the detailed capital programme for Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note and approve the Supplementary Capital Programme for Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects as detailed within this report.
- 2.2 Note that the current allocations are part of a 3-year capital programme and delegate authority to the Director of Frontline Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Director of Finance and Digital Services, to extend activity to deliver additional projects during the financial year, where capacity exists for accelerated delivery in accordance with the purpose of the wider programme, or to suspend programmes/projects and reallocate funding to optimise delivery.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This report has been developed to identify commitments for RCT capital funding. The programme is impacted by a number of external factors that cannot be fully assessed at this time and this relates to both physical issues and funding.
- 3.2 COVID19 may again impact on our ability to deliver projects and programmes. Construction activity has continued to be sanctioned by Government and has evolved and adapted in the face of social distancing challenges, supply chain issues and workforce availability. Despite these challenges, good progress has been made through 2021/22 in most areas and it is anticipated that impacts will continue to recede in the coming year.
- 3.3 Projects will again be reviewed on a case-by-case process around deliverability

and risk; flexibility to suspend individual projects and commit resources to other projects within a programme will be key.

- 3.4 The unprecedented floods of February 2020 continue to dominate forward programmes of work in repairing and upgrading our infrastructure including bridges, roads, culverts, retaining walls, together with numerous landslides and ongoing legacy issues related to former coal tips.
- 3.5 Commitments have been made to providing funding to replace and upgrade this infrastructure, much of which will need to meet new expectations around flood events. Substantial grants have been secured during the previous two financial years, some of which will continue into 2022/23 and beyond.
- 3.6 The previous 2 years programmes included significant flexibility to switch resources, and this has enabled the Council to continue to deliver significant infrastructure improvements against the backdrop of uncertainty due to the unprecedented situation regarding storm events, funding, supply chain issues, cost escalation and COVID19. Continued flexibility within the envelope of pre-approved schemes enables resources to be re-aligned to maximise opportunities to deliver projects and draw down grants in the best interests of RCT.
- 3.7 This report considers the detail against the specific 2022/23 capital allocations of £11.203M in favour of Highways Technical Services and £15.162M in favour of Strategic Projects, in order to safeguard the long-term integrity of the highways and transportation network and to enhance the network to deal with evolving travel demands. Specific regard is given to promoting safer and more sustainable travel and to enabling economic activity. Detail for consideration is submitted under the following areas;
- Highways Improvements
 - Land Drainage/Flood Risk Improvements
 - Traffic Management
 - Car Parks
 - Transportation Infrastructure
 - Making Better Use Programme (MBU)
 - Unadopted Roads
- 3.8 The Council has submitted bids for Welsh Government Grants for transport projects related to;
- Road Safety (Capital and Revenue)
 - Safe Routes in the Community
 - Local Transport Fund (including Active Travel and Resilient Roads)
- 3.9 The Council continues to be heavily engaged in the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, supporting the £734M allocated to Metro, a significant proportion of which will deliver electrification of the Treherbert, Aberdare and Merthyr rail lines with 4 trains per hour to the top of each line, now programmed for completion in 2024.
- 3.10 Progress is also being made on the £50M Metro Plus Programme, which will deliver a new transport hub at Porth. The Cardiff Capital Region Transport Authority (CCRTA) has bid for funding towards development of a potential second phase of Metro Plus, within which, consideration is being given to

extending rail services beyond Aberdare to Hirwaun.

3.11 During the 2021/22 Financial Year, significant sums of grant funding have been secured via the Regional Local Transport Fund allocation. Studies have progressed related to;

- North West Cardiff – RCT Rail Corridor
- Aberdare to Hirwaun Rail Service extension
- New Station Treforest Estate
- Strategic Park and Ride – Taffs Well/Treforest area
- Mid Valleys Connectivity (including potential rail extension Treherbert – Tynnewydd)
- Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) Funding

These projects are the subject of grant applications via the CCRTA for continued development during 2022/23. A contract has been let to provide over 30 pairs of electric vehicle charging points across RCT. Options to extend this are under review. 5 fully accessible electric taxis are now operational across RCT on a free “try before you buy” trial with taxi operators, supported by dedicated EV charge points. Further work is ongoing to establish a car club across the region utilising electric vehicles.

4 SUPPLEMENTARY CAPITAL PROGRAMME

4.1 Highways Improvements

4.1.1 The Highways Network represents the most significant asset of the Council, valued in excess of £3.4Bn and comprises of carriageways, footways, structures (bridges, retaining walls, culverts, etc.), street lighting, traffic signals and signs, safety barriers, highway drainage, etc.

4.1.2 The network has now benefitted from eleven years of enhanced levels of investment, and this will continue into 2022/23.

4.1.3 The total allocation of capital resources for the Highways Improvement Schemes, as included in the Capital Programme for 2022/23, is £11.203M and is broken down into works packages in the table below. This includes previously reported slippage of £3.898M of Highway & Parks Structures funding. Spending plans for this programme of works are detailed in this report.

Work Area	£M
Carriageways	3.663
Footways	0.437
Unadopted Roads	0.500
Structures	5.650
Parks Structures	0.548
Street Lighting	0.200
Traffic Management	0.160
Car Parks	0.045
Total	11.203

- 4.1.4 Carriageways;** A programme of identified carriageway resurfacing and surface treatment to the value of £3.663M will be funded in 2022/23. A pool of schemes has been previously approved and a further £3.263M proposed schemes to be added to this pool are listed in Appendix 1. The actual schemes to be implemented in 2022/23 will be drawn from the approved pool based on officer prioritisation and deliverability constraints. These identified schemes will be supplemented by £0.300M to carry out minor surface repairs (larger patches), £0.05M of essential repairs to be identified by officers throughout the period, £0.05M of drainage works, making up the allocated £3.663M.
- 4.1.5 Footways;** are considered to be a high risk to the Council. An identified programme of resurfacing and surface treatment to the value of £0.437M will be funded in 2022/23. A pool of schemes has been previously approved and this will be supplemented with the list of footway schemes included at Appendix 1. The actual schemes to be implemented in 2022/23 will be drawn from this pool based on officer prioritisation and deliverability constraints.
- 4.1.6 Unadopted Roads;** Building on the funding allocated in 2021/22, together with Welsh Government grant, a further £0.500M is allocated to unadopted roads to enable more streets to be made up to adoptable standards and formally adopted as highways maintainable at public expense. The list of streets proposed to be made up is included at Appendix 1.
- 4.1.7 Street Lighting;** An ongoing programme of column replacement and a replacement of the Council's network of supply cables is proposed with a proposed budget allocation of £0.200M in 22/23. The proposed programme is listed in Appendix 1.
- 4.1.8 Highway Structures;** There are significant challenges associated with maintaining highway structures with a number of structures in a critical condition. A total budget of £5.650M (including £3.850M of previously identified slippage from 2021/22) has been allocated for 2022/23. A full list of proposed schemes can be found in Appendix 1. Project Management Costs will be allocated appropriately.
- 4.1.9** A design and build contract for the replacement **Brook Street Footbridge**, adjacent to Ystrad rail station is currently ongoing. This footbridge forms a link between Ystrad and Nant-y-Gwyddon Road and provides the only access to the northbound platform of Ystrad railway station for disabled people. It is an extremely large and complex scheme with very difficult site access, works over both a river and railway, and a requirement to maintain access to the northbound platform of the station. Construction work has commenced. A bid for Active Travel grant funding has been submitted to supplement / replace this funding. Should this bid be successful, any of this allocation which can be released will be diverted to the schemes identified in Appendix 1 as Reserve Schemes Previously Prepared.
- 4.1.10 Imperial Bridge Refurbishment** is awarded and due to commence on site in April 2022. The works will entail bearing replacement, re-waterproofing, new joints and steelwork repairs.
- 4.1.11 Llanharan Railway Footbridge Replacement** has commenced on site (with the removal of the previous structure completed by Network Rail in January

2022). £850,000 of allocated funding will be taken forward into 2022/23 for completion in July 2022, via a contract awarded to Centregreat.

4.1.12 **Nant Cwm Parc Cantilever** is situated on the A4061 Station Road in Treorchy upstream of **Institute Bridge** that carries the road over the stream at the junction with Dyfodwg Street. The scheme to replace this life-expired structure and strengthen Institute Bridge commenced in 2021/22. Due to delays, work in the river could not be completed prior to the works embargo and will be completed in 2022/23. Funding will be slipped from 2021/22 to complete the works.

4.1.13 A number of highway structures schemes have been prepared for future implementation should additional funding become available. These schemes are listed in Appendix 1. This includes advanced preparation for works as Structures schemes have long lead in times whilst determining the scope for repairs and/or replacements.

4.1.14 **Parks Structures:** A budget of £0.5M is allocated in 2022/23 in addition to the £0.048M being carried forward from 2021/22. A programme of inventory collection and inspection continues, and design work has been progressed on a number of schemes for implementation in 2022/23. A pool of schemes from which projects will be taken forward is given in Appendix 1 - Table 6. The programme of works will be supplemented by an allocation of £0.080M for Project Management costs.

4.1.15 **Storm Dennis:** A number of Highway and Parks and Countryside structures and embankments were damaged during Storm Dennis. Due to the complicated nature of some of the work and seasonal constraints related to working in watercourses, many schemes have been prepared over the past 2 years and are now ready for delivery. A £6.441M budget is assigned to this for 2022/23 funded by WG and further funding will be secured each financial year to maintain the momentum of the recovery programme. Castle Inn Footbridge Replacement is currently at planning and tender stage with significant service diversions currently ongoing in advance of the main contract which will be carried out this summer. Berw Road Bridge (White Bridge) is at listed building consent and contract preparation stage for major repairs to be undertaken during Summer 2022. Tynybryn Footbridge and Embankment and Feeder Pipe Footbridge are at feasibility stage.

4.1.16 Brook Street Replacement Retaining Wall, Porth, is at design stage for a replacement highway wall alongside the River Rhondda.

4.1.17 The list of structures known to be affected by Storm Dennis are included in Appendix 1 - Table 8 for reference.

4.2 Land Drainage/Flood Risk Improvements

4.2.1 The Capital Land Drainage Programme supports works on land drainage and flood alleviation schemes, which are of such scale that their cost places them outside the framework of routine maintenance supported by the revenue programme.

4.2.2 With regard to land drainage (Flood Alleviation) schemes, the Council is

frequently able to benefit from Welsh Government (WG) grant support (85%) as the Land Drainage Authority under Section 59 of the Land Drainage Act 1991 and the Lead Local Flood Authority under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. In support of this process the land drainage capital programme identifies a number of project business cases targeted at attracting external funding support. These business cases will be carried out on a rolling 3-year programme with 1-2 completed per year.

- 4.2.3 Progression of schemes will be dependent on successful application for grant following the 5-case business model process through Strategic Outline Case (SOC), Outline Business Case (OBC) and Full Business Case (FBC) and where appropriate a Business Justification Case (BJC). An allowance has been made within the drainage improvements programme for progression of such business cases and schemes in order to provide the required match funding. Appendix 2a identifies the business cases and projects currently under development.
- 4.2.4 Appendix 2b identifies projects which had a grant bid submitted to the Welsh Government in January 2022 for Resilient Roads Fund grant. This is the third year that councils have had the opportunity to secure funding aimed at mitigating the effects of Climate Change on the transportation network. Over £3M was allocated to RCT during 2021/22.
- 4.2.5 As these bids are centred on areas of high flood risk to the network, they are included in this section. Progression of the projects will be dependent on grant confirmation.
- 4.2.6 The details of the Drainage/Flood Risk Improvements Programme for 2022/23 with £0.155M of funding allocated is provided in Appendix 2.

4.3 Traffic Management

- 4.3.1 As part of its network management duties under the Traffic Management Act and the Highways Act, the Council has the ability to implement improvements to the management of traffic within the County Borough. Finance for the programme is provided by an allocation of core capital funding of £0.160M.
- 4.3.2 The Council's capital allocation will enable the implementation of small scale schemes and provide safety aids such as warning signs, the introduction of traffic orders and the provision of residents parking. Details of the 2022/23 Capital Programme are included in Appendix 3.
- 4.3.3 Traditional Welsh Government Road Safety Capital Funding has effectively been suspended for 2022/23 in favour of focusing on implementing the default 20mph programme. RCT has been allocated indicative funding of £1.073M to prepare to roll-out default 20mph across RCT. This will be a significant challenge.

4.4 Car Parks

- 4.4.1 An ongoing programme of repairs and upgrades to the Council's car parks will continue with a £0.045M allocation in 2022/23.

4.5 Transportation Infrastructure

4.5.1 The total allocation for Transport Infrastructure for 2022/23 in the Capital Programme amounts to £14.989M.

4.5.2 The allocations are as follows;

- **Llanharan Link Road - £5.550M**

Good progress is being made in respect of this project which has now been allocated £7.990M including Local Transport Fund Grant from Welsh Government. This project will provide the eastern leg of the link road as a continuation of the existing western leg and is subject to completion of the central section, which is required to be provided by developers of adjacent residential development, and phased to accord with triggers attached to their planning consents. The eastern leg will connect with the A473 to the east of Llanharan and reduce the impact of traffic along the existing route, providing relief for affected communities, particularly around Llanharan Square. It is anticipated that significant developer contributions will be secured to assist funding the delivery of this project in future years.

The Pre-application planning consultation took place during 2021. This year will see the submission of a full planning application, which will continue in parallel with the Roads Review being carried out by the Welsh Government.

- **Dualling A4119 Coedely to Ynysmaerdy (known locally as Stinkpot Hill) - £5.341M**

Good progress is being made in respect of this project which has now been allocated £21.715M including £11.417M Levelling Up Fund Grant from Central UK Government, which is in addition to previous years funding from Welsh Government. Detail design has been completed to dual the existing single carriageway and substandard section of the strategic transport corridor linking the Rhondda Fawr with Llantrisant/Talbot Green and Junction 34 of the M4 motorway. The scheme proposes to extend the existing high quality dual carriageway running from the M4 to Ynysmaerdy, right up to the Coedely roundabout which serves the strategic development site at Coedely. The current substandard single carriageway is perceived by developers as being major barrier to development on this site. The scheme will therefore not only improve connectivity along this key corridor but is already acting as a catalyst for development of this strategic site. Procurement of a main contractor is progressing with works programmed to commence Autumn 2022. Significant works have already taken place to divert statutory undertakers' apparatus in advance of the main contract. The Compulsory Purchase Order and Side Roads Order are currently being concluded. This scheme is not within scope of the Welsh Government Roads Review and is therefore capable of immediate delivery.

- **A465 Cynon Gateway North Link Road - £1.500M**

Good progress is being made in respect of this project which has now been allocated £4.030M including Local Transport Fund Grant from Welsh Government. Preliminary design has been completed on the project which builds on previous feasibility work. A full planning application was submitted last year, and a planning decision is expected imminently. Once planning permission is granted the detail design stage of the project will be procured with design work expected to commence Autumn 2022, subject to the outcome of the Roads Review currently being undertaken by the Welsh Government. The Council continues to work with the Welsh Government and their appointed contractor in respect of the integration of the bypass and the A465 (Heads of the Valleys) Dualling of Sections 5&6 project. The dualling scheme now includes a roundabout at Croesbychan which will accommodate the Cynon Gateway link road. This will provide a gateway from the trunk road to the Cynon Valley and will aid in relieving traffic from Llwydcoed and Penywaun. The importance of this road has been recognised by the Welsh Government and they continue to work with RCT towards early delivery of this project.

- **Gelli Treorchy Link Road - £0.343M**

Feasibility studies have commenced on investigation of options to relieve traffic congestion in Treorchy. Stag Square is a major bottleneck causing congestion and delays to users of the road network including public transport. The study will look to identify potential options to reduce congestion.

- **Park and Ride Programme - £0.640M**

The Park and Ride programme is intended to create additional parking capacity at rail stations across RCT to enable car drivers to switch to rail travel encouraging modal shift in favour of more sustainable forms of travel that contribute to reducing congestion and harmful emissions.

Park and Ride is a key element to enable mode shift and promote accessibility to the Metro and opportunities to add value to Metro will be kept under review as the full scope and detail of the Metro project crystallises.

4.6 Making Better Use (MBU) Programme- £1.100M

4.6.1 The Council continues to invest in a Making Better Use (MBU) programme. The ethos of this programme is to identify low cost, high value improvements for congested sections of the Council's highways network, to improve traffic flows, ease congestion and have a positive impact on road safety.

4.6.2 The proposed programme of MBU projects is included at Appendix 4

4.7 Miscellaneous Improvements - £0.515M

4.7.1 A series of miscellaneous improvements are proposed to be developed and where practicable, implemented to deal with a number of operational issues

covering safety, accessibility, efficiency, capacity and enhancements to bus corridors, including joint working with Trevallis to resolve local highways related issues.

5 EXTERNAL GRANTS

- 5.1 At the time of drafting this report, over £6.777M of Welsh Government transport related grants have been secured by RCT during 2021/22 via Local Transport Fund, Local Transport Network Fund, Road Safety Grant, and Safe Routes in the Community Grant, and a further £11.417M of Central UK Government Levelling Up Fund Grant. The Council continues to explore the potential to accommodate any further potential 2021/22 WG budget underspends, with requests for additional funding submitted on 4th March 2022.
- 5.2 Bids for Road Safety, Active Travel, Safe Routes in Communities and Local Transport Fund were submitted at the end of January and early February with grant offers anticipated before the start of the new financial year.
- 5.3 At the time of drafting this report, over £7m of Welsh Government Drainage/Flooding related grants have been secured by RCT during 2021/22. Projects identified on the Welsh Government pipeline for capital investment in Land Drainage/Flood Risk Improvements have been submitted for inclusion for 2022/23 at approx. £3M, and await confirmation of approval in principle, also pending business case approval. Grant Bids have also been submitted for 15 Small scales schemes (£1.45M) and 16 Schemes under Resilient Roads (£2.4M).
- 5.4 It is anticipated that ongoing work to repair infrastructure damaged during exceptional storm events and expenditure related to ensuring the safety of former coal spoil tips will continue to be fully funded by Welsh Government with extensive discussions ongoing with Welsh Government regarding tip safety funding.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 Equality and Diversity issues will be considered as part of determining the final detail of the proposed schemes.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 There are no consultation requirements relating directly to the report but the proposed schemes will (or have) involve varying degrees of consultation, some of which will relate to statutory processes (such as Traffic Regulation Orders).

8 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment is not necessary at this time.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The funding allocation to support schemes contained within this report was agreed by Council on the 9th of March 2022 as part of the three-year Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2024/25. This report does not commit any additional spend over and above this agreed allocation.

10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

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

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

- 11.1 This investment programme supports the Council's Corporate Plan Priority 'Places – Where people are proud to live, work and play'.
- 11.2 The programme is wide ranging. It deals with the maintenance and provision of transport assets created in order to meet travel demand. The programme supports enhanced connectivity to link homes with employment opportunities, education, and health facilities, and to act as a catalyst for development and regeneration. In conjunction with grant applications, a range of sustainable and active travel opportunities are promoted.
- 11.3 The programme also seeks to reduce flood risk and insulate communities from the damaging impacts of climate change in light of more frequent extreme weather events.
- 11.4 The programme supports the Well-Being goals fostering prosperity and resilience with inclusive and sustainable transport options supporting more cohesive and vibrant communities.

12 CONCLUSION

- 12.1 The above programme continues the enhanced levels of investment under the RCTInvest initiative, delivering sustained improvements to the resilience and durability of our highways and transportation infrastructure, promoting sustainable transport opportunities and network efficiency.
- 12.2 Consequently, Frontline Services will coordinate and deliver significant investment in a number of important areas during 2022/23 and the proposed programme is accordingly recommended for approval.
- 12.3 The Welsh Government LGBI programme concluded in 2014/15 and combined with core capital resources totalled an unprecedented £84M highway maintenance investment programme over nine years. This has enabled significant improvement in the condition of the highway network.

12.4 RCT is one of the few Councils that has continues to make meaningful and significant investments in its highway network since the demise of LGBI funding. The table below demonstrates the level of progress that has been made.

Indicator	2010/11 Indicator	2021/22 Indicator
THS011a – percentage of A class roads requiring maintenance	16.2%	3.7%
THS011b – percentage of B class roads requiring maintenance	15.2%	4.8%
THS011c – percentage of C class roads requiring maintenance	15.3%	2.3%
THS012 – percentage of all classified roads requiring maintenance	15.7%	3.6%

12.5 The Council, in common with all LAs across the UK faces significant challenges in maintaining this enormous and complex asset. The indicators above are directly impacted by the levels of funding available to maintain the asset. Whilst there is clearly a level of funding required in maintaining asset condition in a steady state, reducing funding below an optimum level creates greater challenges for the future. The ongoing level of investment respects that principle and should continue to see the highway network in RCT improving in comparison with other local authorities.

12.6 The condition of the Council's highways structures assets is recognised as a significant challenge with enhanced and continued capital and revenue funding allocated every year since 2017/18.

12.7 The commitment of the Council to invest in transport infrastructure enables the Council to be able to engage with Welsh Government and provide flexibility to accommodate WG underspend. The Council has continued to benefit significantly from this strategy.

12.8 The programme is as always subject to minor changes due to possible engineering difficulties or programming and coordination issues with statutory undertakers. Programme delivery will still be immensely challenging due to supply chain challenges and cost escalation, the flexibility to switch funding across programmes will ensure the best outcomes for RCT.

Appendix 1**Table 1a Additional schemes for Inclusion in Carriageway Works Pool**

<u>Carriageway Improvements</u>		
Street Name	Town	Budget
Violet St	Aberaman	21000
Jubilee Road	Godreaman	34000
William St	Abercwmboui	11000
Jenkin St	Abercynon	32000
Price's Place	Gadlys	16000
Ann Street	Gadlys	18000
Cemetery Road	Trecynon	22000
Mill St	Trecynon	49000
Dolcoed	Llwydcoed	17000
Ebenezer St	Trecynon	27000
The Square	Beddau	25000
Brynna Rd	Brynna	38000
Heathfield Crescent	Llanharan	32000
Main Road	Church Village	25000
Brookside Close	Cilfynydd	16000
S/O Oakland Terrace	Cilfynydd	8000
Bedw Road	Cilfynydd	10000
Morton Terrace	Clydach Vale	82000
S/O Park St	Clydach Vale	7000
Brynheulog Terrace	Clydach Vale	15000
Clydach Road	Clydach Vale	40000
Bryngolwg	Cwmbach	23000
Well Place	Cwmbach	12000
Aberdare Road	Cwmbach	38000
Phillip Row	Cwmbach	15000
Trebanog Road	Cymmer	31000

Aubrey Rd	Cymmer	36000
Avondale Court	Glynfach	41000
Duffryn St	Ferndale	70000
Mountain Row	Ferndale	40000
Baptist Row	Ferndale	44000
Brown St	Ferndale	25000
New Blandy Terrace	Gilfach Goch	17000
S/O Pen y Bryn	Glyncoch	30000
S/O Garth Avenue	Glyncoch	13000
Ross Close	Pen-y-Coedcae	17000
Arran Close	Pen-y-Coedcae	20000
Lionel Terrace	Rhydyfelin	15000
Ebenezer St	Rhydyfelin	9000
Brynsiriol	Hirwaun	44000
Maescynon	Hirwaun	14000
Ewenni Fach	Llanharan	8000
The Square	Llanharan	13000
S/O Chapel Road	Llanharan	6000
School Terrace	Llanharan	9000
Tylacoch	Llanharry	18000
Llanharry Road	Llanharry	25000
High Street	Llantrisant	24000
Heol y Graig	Llantrisant	3000
Castle St	Llantrisant	11000
Y Graig	Llantrisant	12000
Turberville Street	Llwynypia	46000
Glandwr to Argyle Terrace	Llwynypia	13000
Brook St	Maerdy	25000
Rowley Terrace	Maerdy	11000
London St	Mountain Ash	33000
Cefnpennar Road	Cefnpennar	50000
Tanycoed to Woodfield Terrace	Penrhiwceiber	15000
Hillside	Penrhiwceiber	31000
Gelli Rd	Gelli	39000

Maindy Road	Ton Pentre	61000
Elizabeth St	Pentre	74000
Amos Hill	Penygraig	90000
Amos Hill to Grai yr Eos Terrace	Penygraig	12000
Cornwall Road	Williamstown	20000
Amos Hill to Balaclava Court	Penygraig	8000
Arthur St	Williamstown	12000
Haulfryn	Penywaun	65000
Miskin Road to R/A	Miskin	43000
Llantrisant Road	Talbot Green	10000
Castan Road	Pontyclun	39000
Morgan St	Pontypridd	30000
Charles St	Porth	61000
Leslie to Primrose Terrace	Llwyncelyn	8000
Mount Rd	Rhigos	40000
Cwm Isaac	Rhigos	29000
Charles St	Pwllgwaun	22000
Distillery Road Lane	Hopkinstown	13000
Coed Isaf Road	Maes-y-Coed	15000
Ilan Avenue	Rhydyfelin	15000
Wordsworth Gardens	Rhydyfelin	25000
Castle St	Taffs Well	9000
Stonehouse Cottages	Nantgarw	15000
Heol Ty Maen	Upper Boat	15000
Heol Edwards	Nantgarw	25000
Green Park	Talbot Green	72000
Danygraig Crescent	Talbot Green	34000
Fairhill Drive	Tonteg	26000
Holywell Road	Tonteg	15000
Brookside	Tonteg	21000
Kenry St	Tonypandy	75000
Dunraven St	Tonypandy	18000
Llwynypia road	Tonypandy	18000
Ely Valley Road	Coedely	74000

Manley Close	Tonyrefail	70000
S/O Prichard St	Tonyrefail	9000
Garth St	Coedely	15000
Rhys Street to Heol Trewilliam	Edmondstown	14000
Pembroke St	Thomastown	50000
East St	Trallwn	27000
Side of Scarborough to Merthyr Rd	Pontsionnorton	14000
Marjorie St	Trealaw	36000
Miskin Rd to Rhys St	Trealaw	36000
Ynyscynon to Buckley Rd	Trealaw	11000
S/O Brithweunydd Rd	Trealaw	8000
St Albans Terrace	Tynywedd	36000
Gwendoline St	Treherbert	14000
Ael y Bryn	Treherbert	24000
Brynhyfryd St	Ynyswen	58000
Kenry St	Ynyswen	33000
Graig St	Pontygwaith	18000
S/O Commercial St	Tynant	8000
Mildred to Commercial St	Tynant	16000
Moorland Crescent	Tynant	13000
Bryn Terrace	Wattstown	40000
Davies Place	Ynyshir	16000
Windsor Court	Ynysybwl	11000
Cribyn Ddu	Ynysybwl	21000
Church St	Ynysybwl	24000
Ystrad Terrace	Ystrad	28000
Gelligaled Road to Club Row	Ystrad	13000
Total Carriageways		3263000

Table 1b Additional schemes for Inclusion in Footways Works Pool

Footway Improvements		
Street Name	Town	Budget(£)
Rhos Dyfed	Aberaman	16000
Maes y Deri	Aberaman	7000
Brynmair Road to Godreamon St	Godreaman	7000
Elizabeth St	Abercynon	7000
Steps S/O Aberdare Road	Abercynon	3000
South Street	Abercynon	6000
Alexandra Terrace	Aberdare	9000
Bwlffa Dare Terrace	Aberdare	15000
Parish Road	Tynant	10000
Wyndham St	Brynna	8000
Steps S/O Howard St	Clydach Vale	3000
Howard St to Park Street	Clydach Vale	6000
Glyn Terrace	Clydach Vale	14000
Swan y Nant to Cae Ffynon	Church Village	7000
Waterloo St	Cwmbach	7000
Morgan Row	Cwmbach	9000
Twyn Bedw	Cymmer	8000
Lincoln St	Cymmer	12000
Path 16 to 38 Heol Glyn	Gilfach Goch	11000
Rickard St	Graig	12000
Footpath Grove Terrace to Brook	Llanharan	6000
Jubilee St	Llanharan	10000
Pontrhondda Road	Llwynypia	30000
Rowley terrace	Maerdy	5000
Mona Place	Maerdy	6000
Greenfield Tce	Cefnpennar	16000
Bryn Villas	Pentre	3000
Price St	Ton Pentre	8000
Tynycai Place to George St	Penygraig	4000

Vale View	Penygraig	9000
Dynea Road	Rhydyfelin	40000
Fair View	Edmondstown	6000
Cwrt Glanrhyd	Rhigos	8000
Footpath S/O Towyn Way	Tonteg	6000
Tylcha Fach tce	Tonyrefail	11000
Heol Brynteg	Tonyrefail	18000
Marjorie St to Station	Trealaw	25000
Steps off Miskin Road	Trealaw	15000
Baglan St	Treorchy	11000
Brynbedw Road	Tylorstown	10000
Archer St	Ynysybwl	13000
Total Footways		437000

Table 1c Unadopted Roads Schemes

Unadopted Road Improvements		
Location	Town	Budget(£)
Greenhill Drive	Aberaman	50000
Church Street	Aberdare	13000
Glamorgan Terrace	Gilfach Goch	55000
Woodland Road	Tynant	18000
Alfreds Terrace	Taffs Well	29000
Brynderwen Court	Ferndale	26000
David Place	Llanharan	26000
St. Peters Close	Llanharan	40000
St. Aarons Drive	Llanharan	27000
St. Julius Crescent	Llanharan	55000
Cwrt Forest	Mountain Ash	25000
Stag St	Trecynon	47000
Clive Place	Trecynon	33000
Contingency		56000
Total Unadopted Roads		500000

Table 2 Proposed Highway Structures Schemes 2022/23 (Including reported slippage)

Street	Structure	Town	Budget (£)
A4061	Bodringallt Bridge	Ystrad	110,000
	Brook Street Footbridge	Ystrad	2,757,000
A473	Llanharan Railway Footbridge Replacement	Llanharan	850,000
A4061	Nant Cwm Parc Cantilever and Institute Bridge	Treorchy	300,000
Eirw Rd	Imperial Bridge	Porth	1,633,000
Total			£5,650,000

Table 3 Reserve Highway Structures Schemes

Street	Structure	Town	Budget (£)
Confined Space Culvert Maintenance	Various	Various	300,000
Advance Preparation	Various	Various	200,000
U/C	Brewery Terrace Wall	Pontygwaith	50,000
A4058	Salem Terrace Wall	Llwynypia	80,000
A4058	Dinas R/Wall	Dinas	70,000
U/C	Bryn Eirw Wall Phase 2	Trehafod	175,000
U/C	Darren Ddu Bridge	Ynysybwl	300,000
Adjacent to A4059	Robertstown Footbridge Approach walls	Robertstown	100,000
Lanelay Rd	Lanelay Bridge	Talbot Green	175,000
U/C	Cross Bychan	Croesbychan	275,000
A4093	Graig Las	Hendreforgan	275,000
B4273	Glyncoch Embankment	Glyncoch	750,000
U/C	Margaret Street Wall and Embankment (applied for grant funding)	Pontygwaith	750,000
Total			£3,500,000

Table 4 Highway Structures Advance Preparation Schemes

Street	Structure	Location
B4273	Glyncoch Embankment	Glyncoch
U/C	Margaret Street (applied for grant funding)	Pontygwaith
B4275	Ynysmeurig Bridge Waterproofing	Abercynon
B4275	Cynon Star Bridge	Abercynon
A4061	Rhigos Rock Anchors	Blaenrhondda
A4061	Bwlch Rockface	Bwlch
A4058	A4058 Cantilever	Pontypridd
B4278	Brittania Bridge	Porth
B4278	Rheola Bridge	Porth
A4233	New Rheola Bridge	Porth
	Machine Bridge North	Treforest
	Glanffrwyd Culvert	Rhigos
A4059	Meirion Street River Underbridge	Aberdare
	Glan Road Bridge	Aberdare
A4059	Afon Cynon Bridge	Cwmbach/Aberdare
	Factory Road Culvert	Treorchy
A4058	Trehafod By-Pass Bridge	Trehafod
C229	Dinas Riverbridge	Dinas
	Mountain Ash Comprehensive Bridge	Mountain Ash
	Nant Llanilid Footbridge	Thomastown
Moy Road	Glan y Llyn Bridge	Taff's Well
B4273	Graig Bridge	Ynysybwl
Ynyshir Rd	Wattstown Stone Arch Bridge	Wattstown
Rhigos Rd	Bwllfa Road Culvert No. 1	Rhigos
A4233	Pontygwaith Riverbridge	Pontygwaith
	Cwm Pennar Bridge	Cwmpennar
A4054	Nant Llonydd Bridge	Hawthorn
	Leiners Bridge and Footbridge	Hawthorn
N/A	Nantygwyddon to Gelligaled Park Footbridge	Llwynypia
N/A	Nantygwyddon to Sherwood Street Footbridge	Llwynypia
B4275	Mountain Ash Town Bridges	Mountain Ash
C221	Ferndale Bridge	Ferndale
B4273	Glyncoch to Ynysybwl Cutting	Glyncoch
A4059	Violet Street Footbridge - Upgrade	Aberaman

Table 5 Proposed Parks Structures

Street No	Street Name	Town	Budget (£)
	Project Management		80,000
	Various R/Wall, Culvert and Bridge Refurbishment/Repair		468,000
Total			548,000

Table 6 Pool of Parks and Countryside Projects

Colliery Street Footbridge	Pontypridd
Penrhys Playing Fields Footbridge	Penrhys
Ynyshir Park Tunnel	Ynyshir
Gelli Isaf Tramroad Bridge	Aberdare
Dare Valley Retaining Walls	Aberdare
Rhondda Heritage Park Walls	Trehafod
2022-23 Timber Footbridges	Various
Barry Sidings Retaining Wall Phase 2	Hopkinstown
Cwm Ynys Mintan Footbridge	Penywaun
Blaennantgroes Retaining Wall	Cwmbach

Table 7 Proposed Street Lighting Programme

Location	Work required	Budget (£)
A468 Caerphilly Road, Nantgarw Hill	Replacement of life expired columns	100,000
Gwaelod-y-Garth Road Treforest Industrial Estate	Replacement of life expired columns	30,000
Overhead supplied columns – various locations	Removal of overhead cable systems	30,000
Llwynypia – various locations	Project to upgrade lighting in narrow terraces	40,000
	Total	200,000

Table 8 Structures Affected by Storm Dennis and anticipated to be fully funded by Welsh Government (*in italics works is wholly completed*)

Structure Name	Location
<i>Ynysyngharad Park Footbridge</i>	<i>Pontypridd</i>
Castle Inn Bridge	Rhydyfelin/Treforest
Berw Road Bridge	Pontypridd
Feeder Pipe Footbridge	Abercynon
Footbridges on Rights of Way	Various
Ty'n y Bryn Footbridge	Tonyrefail
Taff Trail Mill Farm Rd footbridge	Abercynon
Penydarren Tramroadside	Aberdare
<i>Bailey Street Bridge</i>	<i>Ton Pentre</i>
<i>Canning Street Bridge</i>	<i>Ton Pentre</i>
Maindy Street Bridge	Ton Pentre
Gelligaled Footbridge	Ystrad
<i>Merlin Bridge</i>	<i>Hopkinstown</i>
Campbell Terrace Culvert	Mountain Ash
Blaencwm River Wall	Blaencwm
Hopkinstown River Wall	Hopkinstown
Berw Rd River Wall	Pontypridd
Sion Street	Pontypridd
<i>Castle Inn River Wall</i>	<i>Rhydyfelin</i>
Pontypridd Road River Wall	Porth
Tonypandy River Wall	Tonypandy
Brook Street Retaining Wall	Porth
<i>Ynysymeurig Wall and Bridge</i>	<i>Abercynon</i>

Maerdy Mountain Road A4223	Maerdy/Aberdare
Ynyshir Community Route Landslip	Ynyshir
Taff Trail and other Active Travel Routes	Various
Nant Gelliwion Bridge	Penycoedcae
Mill Road Culvert	Ynysybwl
<i>Cross Street R/Wall</i>	<i>Ynyshir</i>
Nant Clydach Bridge	Abercynon
Gyfeillion R/Wall	Hopkinstown
Gelli Culvert	Gelli
<i>Afon Dar and Tramway Culverts</i>	<i>Aberdare</i>
Rural Lanes - Storm Damage Repairs	Various
Various repairs and works to culverts, bridges and walls and landslips/embankments	Various

Appendix 2

Proposed Land Drainage/ Flood Risk Management Capital Programme 2022/23

Scheme/Location	Activity/Work	RCT	WG Grant/ other	Total
		£	£	£
Land Drainage Improvements Allowance (match Funding) for progression of schemes after completion of Strategic Business Case/Small Scale schemes Business Case Assumes WG Approval. See Appendix 2A	OBC/BJC/FBC & Works (15% Match Funding)	100,000	566,000*	666,000
Strategic Outline Business Cases	Production of Strategic Business Cases for future projects. Incl Concept/Prelim Design	15,000		15,000
Mynydd-Yr-Eglwys, Ystrad	Monitoring & Remedial Works	10,000		10,000
Small Works Budget	Small scale works <£10,000 to reduce impact of surface water flows affecting properties and the highway	30,000		30,000
Total		155,000	566,000	721,000*

*Assumes successful grant bids

Appendix 2a

Schemes under development that will require a successful application for Grant from the Welsh Government.

Strategic Flood Risk Area (SFRA) and Larger >£200k Individual Flood Alleviation Schemes (FAS)

Scheme	Location	Activity/Work (2022/23) BJC = Business Justification Case OBC – Outline Business Case FBC- Full Business Case
Treorchy FAS - (Phase 1) Cemetery Road	Treorchy	Full BJC - Construction
Treorchy FAS - (Phase 2)	Treorchy	FBC - Detailed Design and Development
Cwmaman Phase 2	Aberaman South	Full BJC - Detailed Design and Development Full BJC - Construction
Glenboi Road - Pumping Station	Mountain Ash West	Full BJC - Construction
Nant Ffrwd Culvert - Flood Routing	Mountain Ash East	Initial BJC Development– Preliminary Design & Development. Full BJC - Detailed Design and Development
Pentre FAS	Pentre	FBC - Detailed Design and Development
Turberville Rd - Porth	Porth	Initial BJC Development– Preliminary Design & Development. Full BJC - Detailed Design and Development
Maes y Ffynon FAS	Aberaman North	Initial BJC Development– Preliminary Design & Development. Full BJC - Detailed Design and Development

Strategic Flood Risk Area (SFRA) and Larger >£200k Individual Flood Alleviation Schemes (FAS)

Scheme	Location	Activity/Work (2022/23) BJC = Business Justification Case OBC – Outline Business Case FBC- Full Business Case
Nant Gwawr (Phase 2)	Aberaman North	OBC Development– Preliminary Design & Development.
Oaklands Terrace, Clifynydd	Clifynydd	OBC Development– Preliminary Design & Development.
Abertonllwyd Road	Treherbert	OBC Development– Preliminary Design & Development. FBC - Detailed Design and Development
Afon Cynon/Wellington St FAS - OBC/NFM	Aberdare	OBC Development– Preliminary Design & Development.
Peat Bogs Restoration - OBC/NFM	Unknown at this Stage	OBC Development– Preliminary Design & Development. FBC - Detailed Design and Development
Bronallt Terrace - Phase 3 (upper Catchment)	Abercwmboi	Full BJC - Construction

Small Scale Projects <£200k Individual Flood Alleviation Schemes (FAS)

Scheme	Location	Activity/Work
Maesyfield Way - Debris Basin	Rhydyfelin	Create an additional debris basin ahead of the primary inlet associated to Rhydyfelyn 3
Bryn Tail Road - Overflow Network	Rhydyfelin	Create an overflow structure above Rhydyfelyn 3 and divert flow to the Rhyd 4 Attenuation Basin - Review of hydraulics associated to project
Telemetry	Various	Expansion of the Ordinary watercourse Telemetry across RCT

Small Scale Projects <£200k Individual Flood Alleviation Schemes (FAS)		
Scheme	Location	Activity/Work
Gwernifor Street - Culvert Relining – Design Only	Mountain Ash West	Rehabilitation of the structural condition (GR5) of the ordinary watercourse Culvert - Approximately 150m (850dia & 900dia)
Kingcraft Street - Culvert Relining– Design Only	Mountain Ash West	Rehabilitation of the structural condition of the ordinary watercourse Culvert - Approximately 150m (500dia)
Jones Street - Culvert Relining– Design Only	Treorchy	Rehabilitation of the structural condition (GR5) of the ordinary watercourse Culvert - Approximately
Nant Cae Dudwg - Inlet Upgrade	Cilfynydd	Addition of Overflow system to existing headwall. Inlet Upgrade - Overflow structure
Nant Cae Dudwg - Scour/Bank repair	Cilfynydd	Repair of bank erosion/landslip causing materials movement towards culverted systems.
Pentre - Structural Renovation/ReLining	Pentre	Rehabilitation of the structural condition (GR5) of the ordinary watercourse Culvert's in and around Pentre - Approximately 130m (450dia), 120m (225dia) and patch repairs within 1100 x 1800 culvert
Bro Deg FAS - Scour Rehabilitation	Cwmbach	Channel scour repairs and facilitation of access route for future maintenance
Cemetery Road - Glyntaff	Treforest	culvert inlet improvement with associated overland flood routing to reintroduce the flooding
Tanycoed Terrace - Culvert Upgrade	Aberaman South	Culvert Barrel Upgrade to provide Q100 SOP (Hydraulic) and structural rehabilitation of the structure
Nant Y Fedw - Scour Repair– Design Only	Abercynon	Culvert Inlet access has deteriorated and eroded and channel has scoured - rehabilitation of channel and revised access provision
Baglan Street - Culvert Relining– Design Only	Treorchy	Rehabilitation of the structural condition (GR5) of the ordinary watercourse Culvert
Cae Felin Parc West - Culvert Relining	Hirwaun	Rehabilitation of the structural condition (GR5 & GR4) of the ordinary watercourse Culvert - Approximately 163m (750dia)

Appendix 2b

Schemes under development that will require a successful application for Grant from the Welsh Government.

Resilient Road Grant - Alleviate the effects of climate change (flooding) on transportation infrastructure

Scheme	Location	Activity/Work
A4058 Tonypandy - Porth	Trealaw/Porth	Existing Highway Carrier Line (filter system) is showing significant root mass within the main system approximately 540m which is reducing the capacity of the carrier line to function resulting in frequent Highway Flooding
A4058 Tonypandy - Porth	Trealaw/Porth	Existing Highway Carrier Line (filter system) is showing significant root mass within the main system approximately 550m which is reducing the capacity of the carrier line to function resulting in frequent Highway Flooding
A4119 Bypass Ynysgrug - Tonypandy - Coedely	Tonyrefail West	Plastic Carrier Line has significant defects i.e root ingress and displaced joints through the length of the network - partial surveys undertaken
Margaret Street, Pontygwaith	Tylorstown	Recovery works to stabilise the hillside and improve ground water drainage to avoid further flooding impacts to the highway
A4061 Abertonllwyd Street	Treherbert	Upgrade of Highway drainage infrastructure to mitigate overland flows generated by pluvial sources, through the use of Linear kerb drainage and reconnection of overland flow into an adjacent culvert network
A4059 Aberdare Bypass	Aberdare West	Upgrade of Highway drainage infrastructure to mitigate low spot flooding within the highway, through the use of Linear kerb drainage
A4059 Abercynon - Mt Ash	Mountain Ash East	Upgrade of existing highway drainage network to accommodate catchment flow with additional interception drainage with upgrades to a Highway Culvert that conveys across the highway
A4061 Rhigos Road	Rhigos	Culvert Improvement works which include upgrading of a Highway culvert Inlet, Barrel and Outlet to accommodate catchment flows.

Resilient Road Grant - Alleviate the effects of climate change (flooding) on transportation infrastructure

Scheme	Location	Activity/Work
B4275 John Street	Aberaman South	Works to upgrade the highway drainage infrastructure, via the upgrading of the highway carrier line and associated inflow gully structures
A4061 Rhigos Mountain Road	Treherbert	Upgrade Highway drainage to mitigate overland flows topping the highway rock netting and mitigate overland flows generated by a highway culvert
Lewis Street – Design Only	Aberaman North	Works to upgrade a Highway culverted watercourse, which will include the structural upgrade of the internal culvert barrel and improvements to the associated inflow gully structures and connections
St Luke's Road, Llwynceilyn – Design Only	Porth	Works to upgrade a Highway Culvert inlet which will include works to the Headwall, debris screens and associated access
Mill Street – Design Only	Tonyrefail East	Works to upgrade a Highway channel/ditch will include works to the upgrade the channel width, depth and banks and associated works to upgrade debris screens within the channel
Ynyshir Road – Design Only	Ynyshir	Works to upgrade the highway drainage infrastructure, via the upgrading of the highway carrier line and associated inflow gully structures
Llanwonno Road – Design Only	Ynyshir	Works to upgrade a Highway Culvert inlet which will include works to the Headwall, debris screens and associated access
B4278 Gilfach Road – Design Only	Tonyrefail West	Works to upgrade the highway drainage infrastructure, via the upgrading of the highway carrier line and associated inflow gully structures

Appendix 3 – Proposed Traffic Management Programme 2022/23

Traffic Management Programme 2022/23	Cost (£)
Disabled Persons Parking Permits	10,000
Minor schemes, signs and markings	55,000
Collision Cluster and Capital Programme Review	4,000
Small scale traffic regulation orders (Speed limit, Road Safety and community benefit)	30,000
Residents Parking Review	40,000
Speed Limit Review	6,000
Remedial works resulting from Safety Audits on previous schemes	5,000
Development of schemes	10,000
Total	160,000

In addition to the above the Traffic Management team will be responsible for implementing the Welsh Government default 20mph initiative over 2022/23 as well as delivering several Education and Lifelong Learning funded projects throughout the borough including the highway elements of the 21Century Schools programme.

Appendix 4 “Making Better Use” Programme.

Scheme/Location	Work Description	RCT (£k)	Other (£k)	Budget (£k)
Highway Network Improvements				
A4059 Corridor Enhancements	Preliminary design and project development	950		950
Ty Nant, Beddau,	Pedestrian crossing	150		150
Total		1,100		1,100

This page is intentionally left blank

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21st MARCH 2022

PRE-SCRUTINY – ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT 2020/2021

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the feedback and comments of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee following its pre scrutiny of the Annual Equality Report 2020-2021 at its meeting on the 28th February, 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the comments and observations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and
- 2.2 Subject to any further comment by Cabinet Members, endorse the recommendations outlined within the Annual Equality Report 2020/21 as attached to the report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The need for Members to be aware of the comments and observations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to their consideration of the Council's Annual Equality Report, for the year 2020/21.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Annual Equality Report has been developed to fulfil the Council's legal duties and obligations to report on its progress in delivering the General and Specific Equality Duties.
- 4.2 The report contains progress made in year 2020/21 in meeting the equality objectives contained in Council's Strategic Equality Plan.
- 4.3 Members of the Overview & Scrutiny were provided with the opportunity to undertake pre scrutiny on the Annual Equality Report in advance of Cabinet's consideration at its meeting on the 28th February 2022.

5. PRE-SCRUTINY OF THE ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2019/20

- 5.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on the 28th of February 2022, to consider the Annual Equality Report for the year 2020/21.
- 5.2 At the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members welcomed the Annual Equality Report and commented that it had successfully captured a wide range of issues and actions that had and were currently being undertaken, despite the high level of demands on the service area, which demonstrated the Council's commitment to the principles of equality and diversity.
- 5.3 Members were pleased to see that their comments from last year had been incorporated into the report to include the emerging issues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement as part of the future work.
- 5.4 Referring to section 7 of the report, Equality Impact Assessments, it was proposed that in future policy be updated to include a 'Children & Young People's Rights Scheme' which would ensure that all children are consulted on all aspects of the Council's services and reflect the 5 key principles of policy development for local authorities by the Children's Commissioner for Wales.
- 5.5 Members considered that the following areas within the report required strengthening to improve equality and diversity:
- Special Education needs provided through the medium of the Welsh Language;
 - The barriers of closing the gender gap (specifically to remove the word "**whether** barriers exist") and;
 - Equal access to Services.
- 5.5 Members were pleased that "the Council continues to be recognised as an inclusive employer by ranking in [Stonewall's Top 100](#) employers in 2020" , demonstrating its commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusivity and applauded the "Women in Leadership Programme" which they considered to be critical in developing positive role models across the local authority.
- 5.6 The Committee spoke of the difficulties faced by some residents with disabilities manoeuvring around the county borough and was pleased to hear that the Disability Forum (which is looking to be regionalised) does consider highways issues such as dropped kerbs and is encouraging residents to voice their concerns with regards to these issues.
- 5.7 In conclusion, Committee requested that future work also includes reference to the Ukraine crisis and the potential impact the threat of war is having on children and the level of support they are receiving in schools. Committee also sought to include a table of compliments to balance the 'complaints and service improvements' table which would also support future service improvements.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

7. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 The report contained within Appendix B has been presented to Scrutiny for pre scrutiny prior to consideration by Cabinet.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 Any financial implications are outlined within Appendix B of the report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The Council's Annual Equality Report has been developed in line with legislative requirements and guidance produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

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

- 10.1 Equality considerations feature throughout Corporate and National priorities and specifically the contents of this report contributes to a More Equal Wales and a Wales of Cohesive Communities.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 It is recognised that scrutiny is a vital component of good governance and improves Councils' decision making, service provision and cost effectiveness.
- 11.2 The undertaking of pre-scrutiny by the Overview and Committee in this area will strength accountability and assist Cabinet Members in taking any future decisions on these matters.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21st March 2022

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND
COMMUNICATION**

Item: **PRE SCRUTINY – ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT 2020/21**

Background Papers

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 17th March, 2021.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT 2020/2021

21 MARCH 2022

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN DISCUSSION WITH
THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, CLLR MAUREEN WEBBER, DEPUTY
LEADER**

Author: Melanie Warburton, Diversity and Inclusion Manager

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide information on the Council's Annual Equality Report, for the year 2020/21.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

Agree to publish the Annual Equality Report 2020/21.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Annual Equality Report has been developed to fulfil the Council's legal duties and obligations to report on its progress in delivering the General and Specific Equality Duties.
- 3.2 The report contains progress made in year 2020/21 in meeting the equality objectives contained in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Public Sector Equality Duties in Wales, which came into force on 6th April 2011, included a requirement for public authorities (including Local Authorities and Schools) to report annually on how it has met the General Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act 2010.

4.2 Reporting requirements are set out in the following regulations;

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Regulation 7 | Collection and publication of information |
| Regulation 9 | Employment monitoring reporting |
| Regulation 16 | Reporting on compliance with the General duty. |

4.3 The Council must report the above information on an annual basis, and publish by 31 March each year.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/ SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

A Welsh Language impact assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

7. CONSULTATION/ INVOLVEMENT

Consultation is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

9. LEGAL OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

The Council's Annual Equality Report has been developed in line with legislative requirements and guidance produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

10. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

Equality considerations feature throughout Corporate and National priorities and specifically the contents of this report contributes to a More Equal Wales and a Wales of Cohesive Communities.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21 MARCH 2022

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN DISCUSSION WITH
THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, CLLR WEBBER, DEPUTY LEADER**

*

Background papers: Annual Equality Report 2020/2021

Officer to contact: Melanie Warburton, Diversity and Inclusion Manager

This page is intentionally left blank



Rhondda Cynon Taf Council

Annual Equality Report

1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021

This report is available in Welsh and can be made available in alternative formats and languages.

To make a request please telephone 01443 444529 or email equality@rctcbc.gov.uk

Contents

Page No.

1. Introduction	3
2. Who We Are	4
3. Reporting on Equality	4
4. The General Equality Duty	5
5. How We Meet The General Equality Duty	6
6. Equality Objectives	25
7. Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's)	62
8. Employment Monitoring Data	63
9. Procurement	64
10. Accessible Information	65
11. Future Work	65
12. Contact Details	65
APPENDIX 1	67
Employment Monitoring Data	67

1. Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Council's Annual Equality Monitoring Report, which represents the Council's approach to providing information on its work in respect of equality and diversity.

The Council is required, under the Wales Specific Equality Duties, to report annually on how it has met the General Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act 2010, and this document contains the information required in order for the Council to meet these duties.

Publishing the information in one report covering all requirements will make it easier for interested parties to identify how the Council is delivering on its commitment to equality, its legal obligations and the action plans contained within its Strategic Equality Plan (SEP).

Each section of the report looks at the Council's progress and the final section contains details of future work the Council needs to do.

Once again Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council has continued to make our County Borough a more equal place for people to live, work and access services, however we recognise that there are, and will continue to be, areas for improvement. Publishing this Annual Report will not only help the Council to meet its obligations under the Wales Specific Equality Duties, but will assist you, as citizens to identify these areas and monitor progress on them.

Councillor Maureen Webber
Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member for Council Business

2. Who We Are

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council covers a wide geographical area and has a population of over 241,264 people. The Council is the largest employer in the local area and the third largest local authority in Wales, over 80% of employees live within the Council boundaries.

The Council is committed to the principles of equality and diversity and we work to ensure that this is demonstrated in our service delivery and in our employment practices.

The Council reviewed its Corporate Plan in 2020. The Council's proposed priorities set out in the [Corporate Plan 2020-2024 'Making a Difference'](#) are:

- 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.

The Plan puts residents at the centre of what we do.

The Council is governed by 75 elected Members and operates a Cabinet system. It has a Senior Leadership Team headed by the Chief Executive and attended by Senior Directors, and employs over 10,000 employees in a variety of service areas and roles based within the following groups:

- Chief Executives
- Community & Children's Services
- Education & Inclusion Services
- Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services.

3. Reporting on Equality

The main purpose of this Annual Report is to fulfil the Council's legal duties and obligations to report on its progress in delivering the General and Specific Equality Duties.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires that all public authorities covered under the specific duties in Wales should produce an Annual Equality Report by 31 March each year. This report covers the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

What the regulations require:

The Annual Report for 2020-2021 must set out:

- The steps the authority has taken to identify and collect relevant information;
- How the authority has used this information in meeting the three aims of the general duty;
- Any reasons for not collecting relevant information;
- A statement on the effectiveness of the authority's arrangements for identifying and collecting relevant information;
- Specified employment information, including information on training and pay;
- Progress towards fulfilling each of the authority's equality objectives;
- A statement on the effectiveness of the steps that the authority has taken to fulfil each of its equality objectives.

4. The General Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a general duty on the Council (and other public sector organisations) when making decisions and delivering services to have due regard in how to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (protected characteristics are explained below);
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Protected Characteristics

This is the term used in the Equality Act to identify the types of people who are more likely to experience detrimental treatment and/or discrimination simply because of who they are. The law is designed to protect them, they are:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender Reassignment;
- Marriage and Civil Partnership;

- Pregnancy and Maternity;
- Race;
- Religion or Belief;
- Sex;
- Sexual Orientation.

When thinking about how to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not, the Council also has to think about the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and are connected to that characteristic;
- Meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

The Council also has to particularly think about how it will tackle prejudice and promote understanding. This report includes information on what the Council has done in order to meet the General Duty.

5. How We Meet The General Equality Duty

To demonstrate how the Council has met the General and Specific Duties relevant information is considered which may include data from local and/or internal sources such as customer surveys, community forums or Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), as well as data from national and/or external sources such as census information, research reports and statistics on hate crime.

Identification and Collection of Relevant Information

When considering how to identify what information should be included in this report, the Council first looked at the information it considered when reviewing its SEP. This allowed the Council to reflect and monitor whether the information is still appropriate in assisting the Council to deliver on the General and Specific Duties.

When reviewing the Equality Objectives we looked at monitoring reports and emerging issues and trends from the previous Annual Equality Reports to identify whether the objectives were still relevant.

Full details can be found in the SEP which can be accessed on the Council website at: [Strategic Equality Plan | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council](#)

The information identified is still very relevant to the delivery of the General and Specific Duties; internal documents provide statistical information that can be used for determining action and enable comparison to identify improvements or areas for further improvement. Internal strategies and their action plans provide information on how the Council is delivering its priorities.

External information, including that with a national context, provides the Council with a raft of data that can assist in developing appropriate and relevant policies and approaches.

The Council recognises that the SEP is not the only area that can identify relevant information and that whilst it is very useful, service areas would also hold information that could assist the Council in identifying how it is meeting the General and Specific Duties. To collect this information a survey was undertaken to obtain relevant information from service areas.

The Council has an EIA process in place, the results of which contribute to the information contained within this report.

Employment monitoring data as provided from the Council's HR system 'Vision' and the e-recruitment system have also been included as part of the relevant information. It should be noted that employment monitoring information includes teachers and all school-based employees.

The Council's Performance

The Council's main strategic plan is the [Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference'](#). This Plan was implemented in March 2020 and sets out the Council's priorities for the 4 years between 2020-2024. The detailed actions to deliver these priorities are monitored and scrutinised by Councillors every quarter as part of the [Council's Performance Reports](#) to Cabinet. At the end of the year, the plans are also subject to more in depth challenge, review and evaluation, the results of which are then included in the Council's annual [Corporate Performance Report](#).

Non Collection and Effectiveness of Information

Whilst considerable relevant information has been collected for this report, it is acknowledged that it is sometimes difficult to collect and monitor all information in a Council as large as Rhondda Cynon Taf. A number of cross-Council networks already exist, such as the Disability Officers Group, to ensure that information and good practice

are monitored and shared, however it is recognised that improvements can always be made to encourage a consistent approach in information sharing.

Use of Information

When considering what information should be used it was important that areas of good practice were identified across service areas to demonstrate that a commitment to delivering equality exists throughout the Council.

Information used in this report includes:

- The Council's Corporate Plan (2020-2024)
- Service delivery/projects (2020-2021)
- Employment practices
- Consultation and engagement programme
- EIAs (2020-2021)
- Employment monitoring information (2020-2021)
- Monitoring and delivery of the SEP action plan (2020-2021).

Equality Information from Service Areas

Many service areas have examples of good practice which help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duties. The information is normally obtained through our internal performance management systems. This section highlights a snapshot of some of the good practice examples that the Council has in place to demonstrate our compliance and commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duties.

Children's Services

Following an independent review, inspection and staff consultation a revised model of supporting disabled children and their families was put in place and changes made to the staffing structure to facilitate delivery. All referrals for disabled children now follow the same process as any other referral into Children's Services and a specialist Social Worker is in place to carry out an assessment as required. This role is bringing consistency to decision making.

In other operational business:

- Translators are obtained to support families where English is not the first language.

- Meetings with family members are held in accessible locations and public transport links are taken into account.
- A Prevention Payment Policy (previously s.17) makes financial support available to prevent need and risk escalating due to resources.
- An employment scheme is in place to support care leavers into work.

Community Services

Community Services deliver a wide range of provision that focusses on people with disabilities, people who are vulnerable because of a range of issues or who are affected by poverty.

During the pandemic, once lockdown was initiated, services focused on ensuring that people in the following groups were prioritised for support:

- Individuals on the Shielded Patients List (SPL) now referred to as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable List (CEV)
- Non-shielding vulnerable individuals who were not on the SPL.

Individuals on the SPL were contacted individually, (the majority by phone, a small number by letter when no phone details were available) and their needs assessed. This included identifying whether they were eligible for a Welsh Government free food parcel, whether they had special dietary requirements (in which case they would be supported through the newly established Food Distribution Centre (FDC)), whether they were lonely or fearful and would like a weekly friendly phone call, whether they needed support to do their shopping/pick up prescriptions.

NHS Shielded/Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Patients

2020 - 2021	Children's records	Adult's records	Total
Shielding Period to August 15 th	435	11,203	11,638
31 March 2021	129	11,581	11,710

Non-shielding vulnerable individuals were able to contact the Council's Contact Centre by phone or complete an online form (or ask a third party to complete it on their behalf) and their request would be transferred to the relevant Hub Co-ordinator in their local area. Written information, developed to communicate with individuals was provided in easy read format for those who required it. A significant number of staff across Community Services have undertaken training on Easy Read formats.

For people on the SPL who received Welsh Government food parcels, an administrative process was adopted that ensured that if a parcel was delivered to an address and there was no response, the information was uploaded on to a database and the RCT Together Team contacted that person to ensure that they were well. If there was no response after 3 telephone calls a Community Response Volunteer was sent to the address to check on the status of the individual. 700 of these checks were undertaken by volunteers during lockdown.

Special arrangements were made locally for people who had mobility issues or dietary requirements that were not accommodated by the Welsh Government provision. These were dealt with by the FDC staff, who (using appropriate PPE) carried the food parcels into a person's home if they were unable to do so themselves and provided bespoke parcels for people with a wide range of dietary requirements due to allergies or religious requirements.

Residents are still able to request emergency food parcels with 64 parcels being delivered during this financial year to vulnerable residents, including those fleeing domestic violence.

Community Services have been working very closely with Citizens Advice (CA) and partners to promote the support available for Universal Credit (UC) claimants as the UK Government has removed the uplift provided to UC customers throughout the pandemic. This has included information on social media and the Council website, dissemination of information to all Council staff and distribution across a wide range of partner networks. In addition to the offer of welfare checks and debt advice from CA, the Adult Education service has developed free budgeting courses for those who need this support.

More generally, Community Services offer a range of support as part of their provision that focusses on improving the lives of those who are disadvantaged through ill-health, disability, economic circumstances as follows:

- All library staff have undertaken Dementia Friendly training and every library has a Dementia Champion.
- Library Managers have undergone Neurodiversity training so that they have a better understanding of how to support people with neuro difference.
- An expanded range of large print books, e-books and e-audiobooks ensure that materials are available for all sections of the community – there are also some braille materials and a facility where people can identify which books they would like to access in braille, and these can then be ordered.
- The Library Service actively supports local and national initiatives designed to promote inclusiveness and diversity, for example promoting books by Black and Minority Ethnic authors.

- The @home library service continued to provide access to reading and audio materials to people who were unable to access their local library due to temporary or permanent illness or frailty or who desperately required books for their mental health during the lockdown. This service continues as normal but with an increased number of residents registered for the service now.
- The Community Development Team have advocated for and facilitated the installation of adult changing places facilities in community hubs and other community venues. 5 Adult changing places have been sited within Community Resilience Hubs and community buildings.
- Community Development and Adult Social Care have collaborated with community groups to develop volunteering placements for people with a learning disability (8 are engaged currently).
- Specific provision was developed by the Adult Education Team for people with moderate to severe learning disabilities and this was maintained throughout 2020 for those who were happy to engage in online provision.
- Employment support provision continued albeit at a reduced rate up to July 2020 and since then the team have continued to have success in supporting people into work. 17% of the people supported into employment in 2020/21 have either a disability or a self-declared work limiting health condition.
- Employment support provision has been actively engaged in the Transformation programme for people with learning disabilities and will form part of a working group looking at work placement and employment opportunities for identified day centre clients.
- Communities for Work Plus managers are designated disability leads and attend Welsh Government Disability Network meetings and Employment Support staff teams have attended several training sessions.

Community Safety and Community Housing

Both core and grant funded services are available to our most vulnerable individuals, communities, and others most impacted by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Housing Support Grant funded services cover those experiencing homelessness, rough sleepers, mental ill health, substance misuse, young people including those leaving care, domestic abuse. Additional support services such as Housing First have been commissioned to provide tenancy and outreach support services to individuals with complex needs.

The Homefinder Team have worked closely with the Diversity and Inclusion Team for advice and support on appropriate wording and use of language for those who wish to make an application for housing for applicants whose personal identity does not

correspond with their birth sex. Ongoing work is being undertaken with the Diversity and Inclusion Team for applicants seeking housing who have a disability.

We also work closely with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board and are members of their various sub-groups and participate in Client Strategy Meetings and Domestic Homicide Reviews.

The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board Substance Misuse Lead and the Head of Community Safety and Community Housing are both members of the Co-occurring Steering Group led by Health. This will further explore how the most vulnerable members of our community with both a substance misuse and mental health need can be offered a single point of contact approach to seek the help they need.

The Oasis Centre service provision is available for both male and female individuals who are or have experienced domestic abuse. Women's Aid RCT are also commissioned to provide a housing related service to anyone in need of domestic abuse support in their own home.

The service area is also involved with the Serious Neglect Panel (SNPP) and the local multi-agency working arrangements agreed by the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board to provide an escalation process for managing cases of serious self-neglect linked with vulnerable individuals. The SNPP will be chaired by the Local Authority area Adult Safeguarding Manager. The Vice Chair will be the Head of Community Safety and Community Housing.

The Community Safety Team place a large emphasis on supporting vulnerable and repeat victims of anti-social behaviour. They identify these victims at the earliest opportunity and put safeguarding measures in place to support the victim.

The Community Safety Team continue to work with families engaged in the Global Resettlement Programme. We also play a pivotal role in assisting dispersal areas and engaging in the Home Office Widening Asylum Dispersal Scheme.

We have also positively engaged at a strategic level with the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership (WSMP) and are a member of, and attend the WSMP Executive Board which covers many aspects of our wider immigration role and work for vulnerable migrants.

Community Well-being and Resilience Service (CWRS)

The primary driver for CWRS is the removal of barriers for children, young people and families to access the right support, at the right time, in the right place, and in doing so ensure that service provision is equitable and accessible for our most vulnerable residents. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is a fundamental pillar and principle across the service and all aspects of our work is focused on effective targeting of service

delivery and service improvements to reduce inequalities. This has enabled the service to respond quickly and efficiently to the needs of vulnerable individuals and families in light of the pandemic and tailor support according to differing needs.

Our Early Years Transformation work this year has delivered on our commitment to remove the two-tiered system in RCT as a result of the geographical limitations of the Flying Start Programme and already there is evidence that children and families who would not normally have been eligible for support are accessing and benefiting from this service change delivered by CWRS.

The Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS) has a Youth Engagement Officer who is able to offer specialist support and advice to young people who are LGBT+. This specialist support includes working with young people who are transitioning, their families and schools to ensure that bespoke and robust plans are in place to provide practical and emotional support throughout the process of transition. The LGBT+ Youth Forum has also been relaunched this year.

In 2021 the Resilient Family Service (RFS) commissioned training to help support families marginalised by their status and to give staff the confidence and knowledge to better support families affected by this. Specifically, to provide RFS staff training to support participants to explore the needs of various groups of migrants and ensure a consistent response to their needs. It also aimed to support practitioners to work confidently when individuals are subject to the 'No Recourse to Public Funds' regime and to understand what services are able to support them when working with various groups of migrants. This will support the work RFS does with refugee and asylum seeker families in RCT.

RFS regularly link in with Umbrella Cymru to help support LGBTQ+ young people and their families and all RFS staff have completed training with Umbrella Cymru to assist in their knowledge base on all LGBTQ+ issues so that any RFS intervention provided is relevant, meaningful and inclusive.

Staff are encouraged to participate in staff networks and EDI sessions arranged by the Diversity and Inclusion Team. Advice on disability issues facing staff within the service has been sought from HR, working alongside the Diversity and Inclusion Team.

Travel training is delivered by YEPS Post-16 Team for young people in need of assistance with road safety awareness and knowledge of how to travel by public transport. Travel training is particularly beneficial to individuals who have Additional Learning Needs (ALN) who are often transported by arranged taxi until they leave school. Access to further education, work placements, training and other life opportunities can then become very daunting because they have no prior experience in preparing and planning journeys independently. Many will be unfamiliar with where to find the information or advice or even the skills to make journeys themselves. Whilst this work has been on hold during the pandemic, YEPS are in the process of restarting the

programme of training it delivers in partnership with the Council's Integrated Transport Unit.

A new youth forum subgroup has been established, Equality and Inclusion, at the request of young people in the County Youth Forum. The work of this group will feed into both the County Youth Forum, school councils and into the service improvement cycle of the YEP service. To date, the subgroup has undertaken a survey with young people via social media platforms, asking for their opinions on what is needed to make RCT a more inclusive county for LGBTQ+ young people. These results will influence the work-plan of the group.

Preventing youth homelessness continues to be a priority for the service, and whilst the number of young people presenting as homeless has reduced over the past year, it is likely that there are many young people who do not have a permanent residence and are temporarily living with other family members or friends. The service continues to develop its universal interventions to reduce the risk of homelessness, like awareness sessions and education programmes to improve life skills. These are delivered both in schools and youth clubs. The service has also piloted a project with Llamau called Upstream Cymru, to identify those most at risk of becoming homeless in the future. It was piloted in two secondary schools (Mountain Ash and Aberdare) with one year group in each. Pupils completed a survey comprising of questions regarding contributing factors to homelessness (well-being, resilience, bullying, family/home life, education achievement). The results helped to identify those most at risk of becoming homeless in the future and these were referred to Llamau workers based in the two schools (or virtual referrals during lockdown). The workers strived to build resilience and improve the family relationship with the aim of maintaining the placement in the family home. The learning from this pilot project has been used to develop a youth homelessness vulnerability profiling tool that can be rolled out to all schools in 2022. Once identified, YEPS will provide a series of young person centred and family interventions to improve relationships that allow the young person to remain within the family home. The level of demand for this intervention will be closely monitored and if required the potential for funding to provide additional resources will be explored.

YEPS has 5 Specialist Youth Workers to provide targeted and open access interventions focused on mental/emotional health and well-being. These Mental Health and Well-being Officers provide direct mentoring, support, information and guidance relating to health and well-being to young people as well as:

- Generate opportunities and services that are informed by mental health and well-being principles;
- Increase opportunities for support and progression for young people within localities;

- Improve the awareness of health and well-being needs amongst young people and professionals across RCT;
- Provide advice and guidance to other professionals, enabling them to better meet the needs of the young people they support.

This team has developed collaborations with private sector businesses to provide targeted support to vulnerable hard to reach groups identified following data analysis. An example of this is the weekly men's mental health and well-being drop-in sessions held in The National Cut Hut Barbers in Aberdare for young men aged 18-25 in response to high rates of attempted suicide and drug use in the locality. As with new ventures of this sort, initial uptake has been slow but both YEPS and The National Cut Hut Barbers are committed to establishing the service.

Care2Play is available for children and young people aged 5-25 years who require assistance, as a result of their personal or family circumstances, to access and/or engage in play opportunities and youth activities. The ethos of the service is to ensure that all children and young people have access to opportunities that are appropriate to their needs and wherever possible are delivered as part of mainstream universal provision. Over the period of the pandemic whilst universal play opportunities ceased, this service, with the support of commissioned providers, has continued to deliver targeted weekly play opportunities to over 300 of the most vulnerable children in RCT referred to the service by Children's Services, Disabled Children's Team and RFS. This service has provided invaluable support to children and families most affected by the removal of preventative support as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. It has played a key role in preventing family breakdown for children on the Child Protection Register and disabled children with care and support needs as well as maintaining the low step up rates from RFS to statutory teams during this time.

Well-being packs were created and distributed by YEPS during lockdown, aimed at helping young people with additional learning needs or in need of well-being support. The packs provided positive activities, advice on mindfulness and de-stressing techniques, as well as key contact information for them to use when in lockdown. Packs have been sent out to over 200 young people struggling with the social restrictions and included:

- Life journals
- Affirmation cards
- Art pads
- Colouring pens
- Stress ball
- Chatter box – providing daily tips on supporting well-being.

Feedback has been positive, and the life journals will become a legacy of the pandemic, to be used with future referrals as appropriate.

We have begun work on the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA), that is due to be submitted early 2022, part of which is to ensure that parks, playgrounds and other outdoor play settings are accessible to as many residents as possible. This includes wheelchair access to enter the parks and to access the play equipment. Funding for this is underpinned by the equality of access to services for all, including addressing barriers facing particular groups of people. The creation of a single point of access via the Resilient Families Service has facilitated equity of access to service delivery, enabling services to be responsive to any needs identified. Our vision of delivering the right services, to the right people, at the right time, in the right place, supports the delivery of equitable and easily accessible needs based services. Addressing, and where possible, removing barriers to access and engagement for particular groups, including, but not limited to, those with protected characteristics, is an ongoing priority. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken for the original 2019/20 CCG grant application and remains applicable.

Appropriate information sharing has continued to ensure appropriate packages of support are in place for those who remain vulnerable as a result of the pandemic.

Prioritising vulnerable children (including disabled children) for play provision continues to provide support for the child and wider family to prevent family breakdown and escalation of need, whilst also enabling services to maintain a level of contact with children and young people known to be at risk.

Services continue to use innovative solutions to remove barriers to access and engagement, including the use of digital solutions.

The Parenting through COVID-19 public survey identified barriers to accessing informal parenting support faced by families. The recommissioning of parenting support provision has been undertaken to address this in the longer term. Newly commissioned services include the provision of a virtual parenting offer as well as face-to-face informal parenting support (with clear pathways to accessing more formal or specialist support) delivered in local community settings available in the evenings as well as during the day.

The Funding Flexibilities Team regularly review commissioned services to ensure they are fit for purpose, deliver value for money and ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the community. Findings from consultations and reviews are then used to inform future commissioning decisions. The regular review of services provides an opportunity for a more co-ordinated approach to planning and service delivery with the aim of maximising resources and improving outcomes whilst ensuring better value for money and improved equal access for all service users.

Corporate Estates

The Director of Corporate Estates is the Council's senior lead for the Disability and Carers Staff Network. The role involves regular contact with the staff network and provision of advice and taking forward initiatives to the Senior Leadership Team for consideration.

Many Council public buildings are accessible and reasonable adaptations have been undertaken where practicable and reasonable to ensure services are accessible to all.

The Corporate Maintenance section have been involved with a number of projects which have incorporated Changing Places facilities, such as Dare Valley Country Park shower block extension, Ynysangharad Park Lido/Café and The Hwbs at Mountain Ash and Ferndale.

Democratic Services

Democratic Services have a key role in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion which includes:

- Promoting Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) with Cabinet reports;
- Working in partnership with the Diversity and Inclusion Manager on the work undertaken in respect of diversity in democracy;
- Assisting in the creation and formation of the newly introduced Impact Assessment Review Panels which looks to strengthen impact assessments for the benefit of the community and its residents. This had included amending the Cabinet and committee reporting style to reflect the introduction of the Socio-economic Duty as well as the Welsh Language Standards;
- The work of the Diversity in Democracy Working Group and the Council's support of the diversity declaration to encourage a more diverse Council;
- The production of a draft Memorandum of Understanding which supports an intended outcome of demonstrating a mutual respect to other people with varying political opinions and a show of working together for the benefit of its communities, following the work of the Diversity in Democracy Working Group;
- Changes taken forward in the Council Chamber ensuring improvements to accessibility including dropping the kerb outside the Chamber and ramps to the top table within the Chamber.

Education & Inclusion Service

Support for Vulnerable Learners

During lockdown periods, close working relationships with Children’s Services allowed us to provide hub placements for vulnerable pupils, with daily attendance monitoring to ensure support could be implemented as swiftly as possible where families were not taking up placements.

Education and Children’s Services worked collaboratively to implement a Vulnerable Learner Protocol to ensure that the most vulnerable learners and families received a high level of contact in terms of safeguarding, well-being and continuity of learning. The Vulnerable Learner Protocol was used for the school closure period and the 3-week phased return to schools at the end of the summer period.

During the COVID-19 period of school closure 22,138 contacts were made with 1,970 individuals. Following implementation of the Vulnerable Learner Protocol (between 1st May and the end of the summer term), 132 referrals were made to the Attendance and Well-being Service (AWS) for collaborative action, of which 124 were successfully contacted by RCT officers with 8 resulting in 101 police welfare checks. An additional 4 pupils during this time were reported as ‘Children Missing Education’ with successful contact established.

This work informed changes to service delivery implemented during the autumn term 2020/21 for continued collaboration and improved data sharing between Council services and schools. This included regular Well-being Response visits by AWS (all settings on a rota every 3 days) and emergency visits for child protection pupils not sighted for 24 hours. This led to over 10,000 visits in the academic year, with referrals being made from these visits to counselling support, Youth Engagement and Participation Service and Resilient Families Services as part of the Integrated Well-being Pathway.

Data for vulnerable groups are now routinely provided by Education and Children’s Services and suggests that there has not been a significant growth in the number of vulnerable learners.

Month	Care and Support Plan	Children Looked After	Child Protection	Young Carer	Statemented
Jun 20	651	398	295	112	1262
Sep 20	661	403	272	117	1263
Jan 21	648	406	290	114	1320

Pupils with Complex Health and Medical Needs

During the pandemic the Access and Inclusion Service (A&IS) held termly meetings with Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board to discuss pupils with significant medical and health needs to ensure they were able to access school safely. Reasonable adjustments with enhanced risk assessments were put in place ensuring that pupils with the most complex medical needs were able to access specialist provision.

Specialist advice was provided to schools to write individual risk assessments for pupils with complex health and medical needs. Exemplar risk assessments were drafted for primary and secondary school settings to support their development. Operational guidance for schools is routinely updated to ensure this adequately reflects the current position for the most vulnerable learners.

Safeguarding

The Safeguarding Policy for schools is updated annually and is approved by the Safeguarding Board. Operation Encompass continues to provide early notification to schools of domestic violence incidents in the children's family homes to promote effective support and intervention.

Barriers to Attendance

We were aware from the attendance during summer term 2019/20 that absence figures would rise significantly due to the pandemic and without statutory instruments (prosecutions/fixed penalty notices for non-school attendance), that the AWS approach needed to change. The Education Psychology Service (EPS) undertook training with Headteachers and AWS staff in the summer term 2020 to assess the impact of COVID-19 on families and staff and how to approach support for families. This learning has helped schools and AWS to support families in re-engaging with school.

Staff have also been encouraged to focus on the positives for education and determine where needs and gaps exist within the resources of families to ensure barriers to attendance are removed.

Well-being Response visits as part of an Integrated Well-being Pathway with Children's Services were introduced in September 2020, providing an increased presence in communities to reassure parents of the measures settings have taken, to make them safe. The Integrated Well-being Pathway works in conjunction with YEPS, RFS, EPS and Eye 2 Eye Counselling Services and continues to operate into the 2021/22 academic year. Schools can refer to AWS for Well-being Response visits which involve a door-knocking service to families where learners are absent. Schools are prioritising vulnerable children for these visits alongside the support they are already offering. All settings were part of a 3-day rota for Well-being Response Visits to ascertain well-being needs and ensure effective safeguarding of pupils and their families as well as

encouraging learners to re-engage in education. During the last academic year, over 10,000 visits were made to ensure effective safeguarding and pupil/family support was in place.

AWS has operated Phase 1 of a revised service delivery model to enhance direct contact with families in need of support due to anxiety about returning to school. This approach is incorporating the YEPS pre-counselling support initiative as part of a collaborative approach to supporting learner well-being along an Integrated Well-being Pathway. In spring term 2021, a survey was undertaken with schools, 111 of 115 schools responded. 82% rated the current quality of AWS as either 'Good' or 'Very Good' with 91% stating they believe the current way of working had improved relationships with AWS; 86% stating the AWS process had helped sight vulnerable pupils who were not attending; and 72% believing the process had increased parental engagement.

Support for Well-being

The 2020/21 Well-being Action Plan, which was supported by a Welsh Government (WG) grant of £120,755 has been implemented and evaluated, demonstrating a positive impact upon building the capacity of schools to meet the emotional and mental health and well-being needs of learners.

The Educational Psychology Service and Children's Services have undertaken training in the trauma recovery model to provide enhanced case management approaches to support professionals to respond to our most vulnerable Children Looked After (CLA) pupils. Children's Services are monitoring the impact of this approach through the residential children's homes, and this will inform future practice.

Temporary Assistant Educational Psychologists provided additional support to pupils/families in Ty Gwyn in relation to well-being within a trauma informed approach. They supported the strategic development of therapeutic approaches within the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). All staff within the PRU have now undertaken training in Trauma Informed Approaches, with 4 undertaking diploma training.

A range of courses including emotion coaching training, mental health and well-being training has been delivered across our schools.

A number of multi-agency working groups have been established including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic, LGBTQ+ and Parents, Pupils, Staff Well-being Group for schools.

Data for exclusions and bullying as a result of racial incidents

Data for exclusions and bullying as a result of racial incidents shows that there were no permanent exclusions due to racial incidents over the last 3 academic years. However,

data relating to fixed term exclusions and bullying incidents demonstrates an increase in the percentage of racial incidents between 2018/19 and 2020/21.

Year	Racial Incidents			
	Fixed Term Exclusions	Percentage of Exclusions	Incidents of Bullying	Percentage of Bullying
2018/2019	20	0.74	20	5.33
2019/2020	10	0.67	4	2.94
2020/2021	20	1.40	9	7.20

The established Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic working group have conducted qualitative research into the lived experiences of Black pupils in RCT aged 13-18. This has identified key themes and priorities for us regarding racial equality in our schools.

Ongoing work is taking place with Stonewall Cymru relating to LGBTQ + awareness and support for schools. This work is now supported by an Assistant Educational Psychologist and will be evaluated to identify future priorities.

An EPS helpline was established during the pandemic. Following the positive feedback from schools, partners and parents, the EPS telephone line continues to form a central part of the EPS Service Delivery Model with 88 calls taking place between September and November 2021.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) Provision

We have invested in support for learners with significant social, emotional and behavioural needs. In addition to our provision in our special schools and PRUs, provision has been established in 10 secondary/through schools for Key stage 3/4 pupils.

We have modified our service delivery to maintain our statutory duties in relation to SEN, including virtual Annual Reviews and Access & Inclusion Panels. Effective liaison between Headteachers and Learner Support Service ensured continuous review of staffing capacity in Learner Support Classes (LSCs). No LSCs have been forced to close due to issues with staffing capacity throughout COVID-19 restrictions and staff were effectively deployed during lockdown.

To ensure families that have a child with a disability or additional support needs can fully benefit from family support interventions the RFS has a dedicated Children with Additional Needs Service (CANS). The service aims to improve their resilience levels with a focus on supporting families where the physical, learning or neurodevelopmental needs of a child within the family is impacting on family life to better understand any additional support needs and improve the relationships within the family. Without the constraints of threshold criteria the CANS Team are able to ensure those families most in

need are appropriately supported. The CANS Team supported 284 families during 2020/21.

Legal Services

Our Elections Team have worked to engage newly enfranchised voters (16–17 year olds) through promotion of a social media campaign and ongoing initiatives as part of Welsh Government's electoral reform agenda.

Prosperity and Development

The Housing Strategy and Investment Team ensures that the service they provide is inclusive, equal and fair for all service users.

All grant application processes are offered online however the service also worked with the Council's Diversity and Inclusion Team during 2020/21 in order to improve the online grant application process, ensuring that service users who require reasonable adjustments in order to complete the online application can access this support.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Feedback

The Housing Grants Department have engaged with 669 clients during 2020/21 in order to gain their views on the Disabled Facilities Grant they received from the Council. The following responses were collated from the applicants following the adaptations made to their home:

- 96% of applicants agreed that they were able to do things they couldn't before and feel more confident and independent;
- 97% of applicants agreed that after the adaptation was completed, it is now easier for their family/Carer to help with their daily needs;
- 99% of applicants agreed that their quality of life had improved;
- 98% of applicants were satisfied with the adaptation they had received.

Overall, the feedback received from applicants is very positive regarding the adaptations they received through the grant. The way in which this information is collated is currently through telephone calls however the service is reviewing this method and will be piloting an online feedback form in 2021/22 (however surveys over the telephone can still be made if required).

Wales Interpretation and Translation Service

The Council is a partner in the Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS) and has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for delivery of the service provided via the City of Cardiff Council. During 2020/21 there were 249 bookings made through the service using 28 languages and BSL interpreters.

The five most requested languages during 2020/21 were Arabic, Romanian, Mandarin, Urdu and Polish.

Delivery of Council Strategies

The Council consults and engages with its residents to collect information that is used to plan and prioritise, identify areas for improvement and service change, set and monitor performance standards and measure satisfaction on the quality of the services we provide.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has brought challenges for public engagement and consultation. In Rhondda Cynon Taf we have developed a very successful face-to-face approach with residents and other stakeholders in recent years and we have had to develop a 'digital by default' approach in 2020 which continued into 2021. Face-to-face engagement with residents has been limited but we are hoping to bring back this approach going forward.

The approach we have used in 2021 continued the positive work by ensuring that all residents and service users had every opportunity to provide feedback. The 2021/22 budget consultation, for example used a 'digital by default' approach, whilst continuing to consider hard to reach groups, those having reduced or no access to the internet and those who prefer to engage through traditional methods.

In 2021 we introduced our Let's Talk RCT engagement website [Let's Talk RCTCBC](#). The site has a suite of engagement tools that has enhanced our offer and made our engagements more user friendly.

We started a conversation on Climate Change by setting up [Let's Talk Climate Change RCT | Let's Talk RCTCBC](#) and used a wide variety of tools to engage with members of the public including a survey, ideas, stories, quick polls and places (mapping tool). The new Let's Talk Engagement website supports the work of the Climate Change Steering Group and the results of this engagement have informed the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

Since introducing the website in 2021, we have engaged on a variety of projects including:

- Let's Talk Local Development Plan
- Let's Talk Welsh Language
- Let's Talk Armed Forces
- Let's Talk Wildflowers
- Let's Talk Electric Vehicle Charging
- Let's Talk Climate Change RCT.

During 2021, we supported or managed 66 engagement activities/consultations and supported a number of Budget and Climate Change face-to-face engagement events.

In 2021/22 the team will support the revised Impact Assessment process with the appointment of a new Community Data Analyst Officer, linking with the data requirements of equality and Welsh language impact assessments. The role also allows for the interpretation of statistical evidence to support services across the Council in their decision making.

Examples of how residents and communities have been involved in the Council's work in 2021 include:

- Engaging with over 1,000 residents on our budget consultation;
- Engaging with Schools and young people via Instagram;
- Consultation on a Welsh Language Strategy, where we held 3 public face-to-face engagement events in Libraries across Rhondda Cynon Taf. Members of the public were able to share their views on how to support the Welsh Language and suggest any additions or general comments;
- Continued engagement and involvement with residents and communities in matters that affect them so that their voices are heard in Council decisions;
- We supported Schools Consultations;
- Continued engagement with the Older People's Advisory Group about issues that could support their ability to get out and about. We have a joint SLA agreement with Age Connects Morgannwg and OPAG to support and engage with older people in RCT. During the pandemic this allowed older people to keep in touch with members through regular newsletters and information provision;
- We have linked in with the Council's Disability Forum in discussions and ongoing surveys;
- Considered a review of our Citizens' Panel and linking in with the Let's Talk Site to manage and promote consultations with registered users;
- We provided a freepost and telephone option for those who cannot engage digitally, in addition to our face-to-face approach;

- We linked in with other services whilst undertaking our face-to-face events, from joining up consultations, to providing waste bags and advice and information;
- We have continued to use online and social media engagement as one of our methods to obtain resident views and promote consultations.

All consultation and engagement documents are available in the Welsh language. We have an excellent working relationship with the Council's Welsh Language department as we translate the vast majority of the work we undertake. We also assist the Welsh Language department with their own consultations. The department continues to support staff members who want to learn Welsh to help them converse with Welsh speakers at the various engagements we deliver.

We have introduced a new question to be used in surveys, to assess the impact that any change will have on the Welsh language or Welsh speakers, which is in line with the requirements of the Welsh Language Act.

At all consultations that we undertake we attempt to engage with the widest range of people that we can. We aim to capture the views of all groups that live within the borough and aim to represent all their opinions and concerns. We have introduced a new question for service change consultations that allows the Council to assess the impact of any changes on a number of protected characteristics. We have also introduced Easy Read versions of all service change consultations, working with Learning Disability Wales.

6. Equality Objectives

In 2019 we launched our Strategic Equality Plan (2019-2022). To aid the development of appropriate and relevant equality objectives the Equality and Human Rights Commission report 'How Fair is Wales 2018' was the main reference source. Equality objectives were aligned to well-being goals contained in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, specifically a 'More Equal Wales' and a 'Wales of Cohesive Communities'.

A comprehensive engagement process was undertaken with the public and targeted engagement was undertaken with community groups that reflect the 'protected characteristics' contained within the Equality Act 2010. The full engagement report can be found [here](#).

From this engagement and consultation with a number of Council service areas the following equality objectives were identified and published in the [Strategic Equality Plan 2019-2022](#). The equality objectives are:

- Objective 1 To better understand the needs of our communities and understand the barriers they face to thrive;
- Objective 2 To reduce inequalities that exist within our communities;

- Objective 3 To promote safe communities;
- Objective 4 To reduce the gender pay gap;
- Objective 5 To create an inclusive workforce.

An action plan has been developed outlining specific actions in relation to each equality objective. These actions will be monitored through service area delivery plans.

Outlined below, we show our progress towards the equality objectives. It should be noted that not all actions were due to commence in the financial year 2019/20 and these will be progressed in following years.

Objective 1 – To better understand the needs of our communities and understand the barriers they face to thrive

Within this equality objective there are a number of areas that require action. The progress towards these actions are outlined below.

Action 1 - Identify community groups that represent the full diversity of the citizens of Rhondda Cynon Taf and develop accessible communication channels with them.

The Council has many well established links with community groups across RCT, for example, youth forums, Older People’s Advisory Groups and the Disability Forum. The focus of this action is to engage with under-represented minority groups and individuals that have not had regular communication routes with the Council.

Community Groups

The Community Cohesion Team continued to work closely with Valleys Ethnic Minority Support, whose members come from many different countries and have a wide ethnic diversity. The group works to overcome barriers to accessing local services, training and employment. Unfortunately, many groups stopped meeting during the pandemic, while others continued to do so virtually where possible. Many attempts were made to contact Project Unity (support for those who identify as LGBTQ+) for example, but we later found out that the charity had ceased operating during the pandemic. Unfortunately this was a common theme amongst many community groups during this time. The Cohesion Team continued to work with the Older People’s Advisory Groups to better understand the barriers that they face.

Disability Forum

It has been a challenge to hold fully accessible meetings with members of the Disability Forum during the pandemic due to members being digitally excluded and/or the

suitability of digital platforms. Telephone contact has been maintained with all members to discuss any concerns they have and to discuss their well-being.

European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS)

During the initial pandemic (lockdown of March - late July 2020) Council officers could only signpost local residents wishing to apply for pre-settled or settled status to the EUSS via phone calls. After the lifting of restrictions the Community Cohesion Officer attended licenced premises in RCT with Council Licencing Officers to re-enforce the message to any EU nationals that they still had time to apply to the scheme up until 31 December 2020. Out of the 19 premises visited, all the staff had already been granted status or were in the process of applying. Throughout October and November 2020, the Community Cohesion Officer worked closely with Citizens Advice Newport to identify work places that may still have employees needing to apply. In early December 2020 information was provided to Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board advising of employees who still needed to apply to remain in the UK after the Brexit deadline.

Safeguarding Week

The Community Cohesion Team assisted South Wales Police in Operation BETSY across Cwm Taf, which was part of the Keep Safe Cymru Card Scheme. The aim of the operation was to identify people who may be vulnerable due to memory loss and who may not be known to services so may not be receiving adequate care and support. This involved visiting town centres to engage with the public in trying to gather intelligence in relation to the above. We were able to gather details from a substantial amount of people. We can now arrange for them to be visited by local PCSO's and provide them with information in relation to crime prevention.

Town Centre Engagement

Community Cohesion Officers and South Wales Police officers engaged with the general public in town centres throughout National Hate Crime Awareness Week. Officers encouraged conversations with the public and information packs were put together and distributed to provide education and information on Hate Crime, reporting routes and support services available.

Veterans

We have continued to develop our engagement with veterans across the borough. After successfully gaining funding from the Armed Forces Covenant we launched the Veteran Advice Service across Cwm Taf in April 2019. The service covers a range of areas, including benefits, adult social care, finances, employment and housing. Since the service launched in April 2019 the service has received over 900 referrals to date. 91% of veterans accessing our service are male, 72% had served in the British Army and 64%

are aged 51 to 80 years old. In addition to Council support, we have been successful in referring veterans to many organisations including: Veterans NHS Wales, Royal British Legion, Admiral Nurses, RNID and many more.

We have built on our support to local veteran groups across Rhondda Cynon Taf. Our Armed Forces Liaison Officer attends veteran groups to provide advice and support and has been successful in establishing 2 new veterans groups, the Taff Ely Group in Rhydyfelin and the Darran Las Veteran Group in Mountain Ash, in addition to the existing support provided to Valleys Veterans in Ton Pentre.

We had a successful bid for funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust 'Forces for Change Programme' and have been able to deliver our Veterans Connected project throughout the pandemic. Through this project, veterans can hire a mobile tablet at any time, free-of-charge, through the Council's Armed Forces Veterans Service. This project enables veterans to stay in touch with family and friends with an overall aim of reducing social isolation. Training is provided to help veterans get connected and stay safe online.

In 2021/22 we will look to implement a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for veterans and reservists. This additional commitment demonstrates the Council's support for the Armed Forces Community and honours the spirit of the Armed Forces. The Guaranteed Interview Scheme is to guarantee an interview to veterans and reservists that meet the essential criteria set out in the job profile for roles that are advertised. The Council recognises that members of the Armed Forces Community can bring valuable transferable skills, qualities, and benefits.

Action 2 - Identify the number of refugees living in Rhondda Cynon Taf that are not already included in settlement programmes.

No refugees (excluding those who are part of the resettlement program) became known to the Council's Community Cohesion Team in 2020/21.

Action 3 - Undertake an employment needs assessment which will inform specific action points relating to young people, disability and ethnicity.

Following WG Guidance in December 2019, the priorities during 2020/21 which informed our Communities for Work Plus (CfW+) and Legacy delivery plans were to engage with specific customer groups. The aim was to meet the WG target of supporting 20% of people into employment who have a work limiting health condition or disability. We achieved 17% at year end with the actual number of 60 exceeding the target number of 50 due to engagement numbers exceeding the target set. Other priority customer groups were refugees, minority ethnic clients and ex-offenders. We reviewed the way we collected and recorded the equalities information for CfW+ and also gave guidance to

staff around ongoing recording of clients disclosures of having a work limiting health conditions and disability.

Due to the pandemic, all our employment support staff were re-deployed for 6 months to community hub work, offering support to vulnerable people in RCT with shopping, picking up prescriptions etc. and the ongoing restrictions did impact on us being able to make progress against this agenda.

However, these customer groups continue to be prioritised during 2020/21 with more progress being made.

Young People

We have opened our CfW+ programme to 16-24 year olds across RCT who were unable to receive employment support from any other ESF grant funded programme or through RCT's Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS). Previously, CfW+ prioritised adult that re 25+ due to the low level of NEETs in RCT and the amount of support that was already available. However, due to the pandemic, the number of young people being referred from DWP for mentoring support increased so we increased the support on offer through CfW+ which included access to our training programmes as well.

Numbers of young people being referred onto our CfW mentoring programme also increased which has meant that we've exceeded our lifetime targets set for the programme.

We applied to become a Kickstart Gateway on behalf of the Council during March 2021 and we have successfully implemented the initiative in RCT. The scheme offers funding to businesses to provide six month paid work placements to young people claiming Universal Credit, for 25 hours a week at minimum wage. As well as providing training, the scheme should also provide practical support for the young person to search for alternative employment before the placement ends.

Ethnic Minorities

We attracted low numbers of clients from minority ethnic groups with 93% of participants identifying as White British, however participants continue to be supported by our employment support programmes. We will continue to work on attracting more ethnic minority people to the programmes.

Action 4 - A community profile to be undertaken for all library areas to better understand the needs of customers.

The service has identified the main catchment areas for each library and then undertaken a profile of each area by using the Community Insights programme which focusses on the following areas:

- population in the wards that fall into the library's catchment area;
- information on children in poverty, people out of work, people in deprived areas disability, pensioners and other vulnerable groups;
- information on housing characteristics: dwelling types, housing tenure, affordability, overcrowding, age of dwelling and communal establishments;
- information on recorded crime and crime rates;
- information on limited long-term illness, life expectancy and mortality, and general health;
- more information on qualifications, pupil attainment and absences;
- information on people's jobs, job opportunities, income and local businesses;
- information on transport, distances services and digital services;
- information on physical environment, air quality and neighbourhood classifications.

So there is a good understanding from the data of the differences between each library area. Use is also made of geographic information available about the level of Welsh speakers in various parts of the borough.

In addition to the above, the service profiles visitor numbers, book issues, downloads, attendance at events at each library as part of their performance meetings with branches and of course listens to feedback from staff and customers.

Evidently the pandemic has had a major impact on areas of delivery as footfall continues to be much lower than it was previously but the development of community hubs which was expanded during this period and the establishment of Neighbourhood Networks has provided more information to the service about local priorities.

Action 5 - Undertake research as part of the local housing market needs assessment into the demand for housing needs for disabled people.

The Council applies the data set out in the Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) when determining the mix of new schemes/properties that are being built with the use of the social housing grant (SHG). The service continues to apply this method in order to tackle the demand for housing among disabled people, which will allow them a stable home to enable them to thrive regardless of the barriers they may face. A full review of the LHMA will be completed by March 2022.

Action 6 - Undertake a review of the Homestep Scheme to ensure equality monitoring questions are appropriate to identify specific needs with an emphasis on the identification of housing needs for young disabled people.

The Housing Strategy and Investment Service are in the process of remodelling the Homestep application process, in line with the Department's digitisation of services agenda. It is within this process that the service plans will include questions in respect of young disabled people accessing open market housing that is affordable for them in line with the affordability test carried out at the application stage.

Action 7 - Improve and develop the collection and recording of customer equality monitoring information across Council service areas.

A comprehensive monitoring toolkit has been developed after compiling best practice examples. The new form reflects current best practice wording, question ordering and response options and takes into consideration GDPR requirements.

Unfortunately due to the pandemic the intended pilot in Leisure Services was unable to commence. We have however worked with individual service areas to improve their own data monitoring.

Equality monitoring data relating to people with protected characteristics is captured by our Community Services directorate as part of:

- NHS Clinically Extremely Vulnerable list;
- Enrolment forms and uploaded to the Capita and EBS systems;
- The equality monitoring section of Customer Satisfaction Surveys;
- Theatre booking systems;
- Employment Support programme delivery.

The data is reported to Welsh Government and forms part of their analysis in relation to whether the grant funding has been used in line with programme requirements.

More use is now being made of data to analyse resident needs and to assess demand for services than was previously the case.

We intend to launch the Equality Monitoring Toolkit across the Council in 2021/22.

Action 8 - To evaluate the experience of disabled people who are on the Homefinder register to understand any barriers to accessing adapted accommodation and to identify improvements to the process as a result.

The Housing Allocation scheme was due to be reviewed and updated in 2020/21, however the pandemic prevented this work from commencing. It is now scheduled to take place throughout 2022/23 and part of the process will involve focus groups with individuals who have applied to Homefinder to understand their experiences. Adapted housing for individuals with disabilities will be extensively reviewed as there has been an increase in the number of applicants who require adapted properties in RCT.

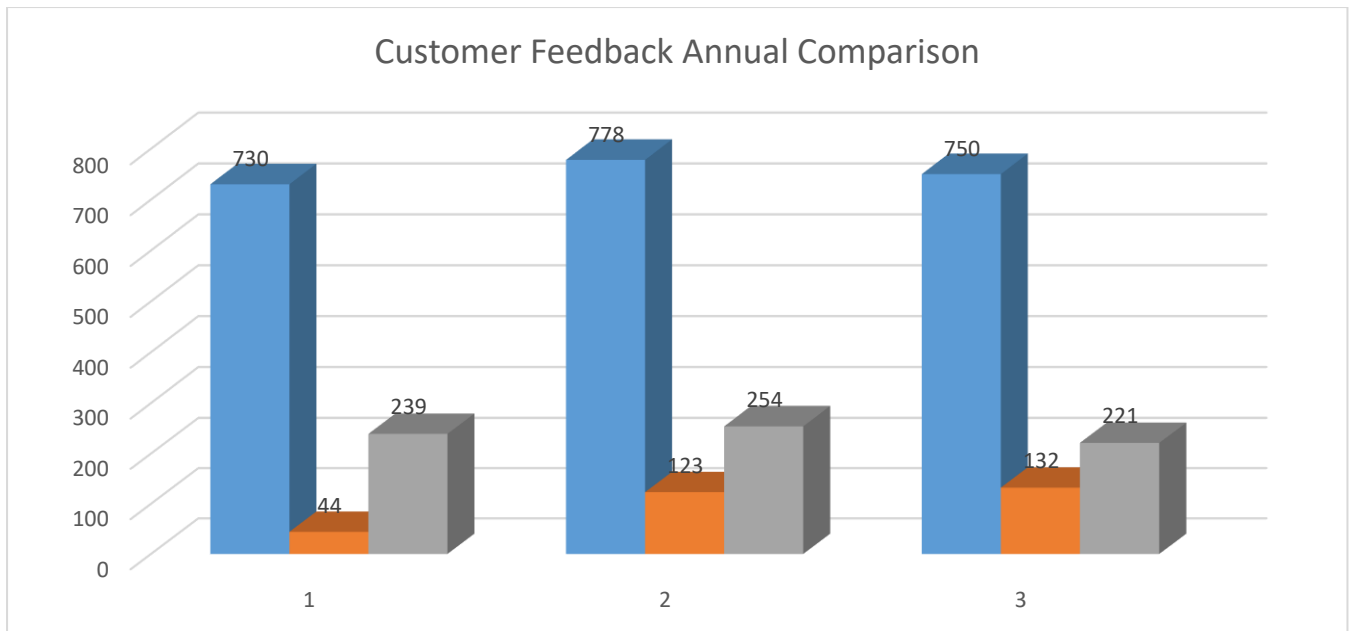
During 2021 many of the Housing Allocation Team have attended training to understand individual needs ranging from unconscious bias, domestic abuse awareness, protection of vulnerable adults, suicide prevention and mental health awareness.

Action 9 - Improve and develop monitoring of customer complaints.

This period has been a significantly challenging and unprecedented time for the Council in having to both deploy services specifically in response to flooding and the pandemic and to manage longer term initiatives to support communities and businesses across RCT. New ways of working have been introduced across all service areas with staff working from home and as a result, some of the development planned for the Customer Feedback Service has been delayed while the delivery of community support and front-line services has been prioritised.

Service areas and Complaints Co-ordinators have throughout the period and despite the presented challenges, continued to effectively manage customer contacts and complaints with some service areas noted to have made improvements to the consistency of complaint recording and for the second year reducing the number of complaints remaining open at the 6 month period from 2.4% in 2019/20 to 2.2% in 2020/21. 61% of complaints were dealt with in 10 working days compared to 56% in 2019/20. Whilst this may be a small improvement all service areas should be recognised for continuing to effectively manage complaints and customers' expectations as well as make improvements through what has been a difficult year.

Key Themes for Customer Feedback



	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
• Complaints	730	778	750
• Comments	44	123	132
• Compliments	239	254	221
TOTAL	1013	1155	1103

A total of 1103 feedback items were logged for 2020/21. This number is consistent with the previous 2 years, however overall contacts to the Council significantly decreased during this period and this along with closed services may have affected the level of feedback received.

Customer feedback through the Council's website remains the preferred option for customers to communicate with 66% of feedback received through this channel. E-mail communication increased from 8.5% in 2019/20 to 20% and this significant rise can be attributed to COVID-19 restrictions and calls in to the contact centre being unavailable for a period of time.

37% of feedback items were not allocated to a queue at the point of reporting. These are cases which have been incorrectly allocated and are in the main complaints for Frontline Services. This is an increase on the figure for 2019/20 and may be attributable to the redeployment of key staff to other positions. It is hoped that the return of staff to their key posts and the development of a new record management system will offer greater flexibility and improve the allocation of feedback items after its implementation.

EXAMPLES OF COMPLAINTS AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

Complaint area	Complaint detail	Service Improvement
Cemeteries	Complaint about appearance of cemetery staff.	This element of complaint was upheld and staff provided with new uniforms.
Contact Centre	Complaint regarding advice given by advisor on how to make a complaint.	Training for all contact advisors on complaints to be scheduled for 2021/22.
Leisure	Complaint about lack of classes in the Rhondda area.	Class programme to be reviewed and increased – achieved October 2020.
Refuse and recycling	Disabled lady unable to access steps to/from house as waste collections blocking access.	Crew advised and alternative collection point to be arranged.
Parks maintenance	Complaint about condition of park following grass cutting. Grass was cut during inappropriate ground conditions resulting in surface mud.	All staff reminded of their training and the need to ensure there is a site inspection to determine suitability of works being carried out.
Transportation	Complaint regarding inappropriate position of bus stop and no consultation with residents affected.	Bus stop signage removed and new location to be found subject to wider consultation.

Currently there is a new system being implemented for all customer complaints and we are reviewing the old system and making improvements to ensure we are collecting the information we require to drive improvements. This includes analysing complaints that relate to equality issues which are reported on separately along with Welsh Language complaints.

Action 10 - Improve local access to information advice and assistance provision for children, young people and families to promote their participation and engagement.

In March 2020, the **Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS)** suspended all face-to-face work with young people and colleagues, as a direct result of the country entering lockdown. The situation required transforming the service's delivery methods almost overnight; virtual platforms were the only option for the first few months of the pandemic, a preferred method of communication for many young people.

The YEPS staff's previous engagement in service innovation and their confidence to use their expertise and knowledge of the needs of young people resulted in a comprehensive virtual youth offer of both targeted and universal services to assist young people to process and manage their situation.

Transforming service delivery methods required the active engagement of staff across the service to effect cultural change, supported by managers who were confident to let staff take measured risks. Focusing on service users, the team was tasked to assess needs and identify requirements, which were then used to reallocate resources and develop contingency plans. Their previous engagement in service innovation and their confidence to use their expertise and knowledge of the needs of young people resulted in a virtual youth work offer available within 72 hours of lockdown commencing. Service data demonstrates significant levels of online engagement with users in addition to the 1:1 support for over 1000 young people delivered remotely.

The service realigned its online offer, with a significant increase in the volume of information, advice and guidance, as well as universal activities available to young people via the website (www.wicid.tv) and social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube). The comprehensive offer was delivered by YEPS with significant contributions from delivery partners, including sexual health teams, substance misuse organisations, and commissioned providers.

The **Family Information Service (FIS)** played a key role in disseminating information to service users and families during the pandemic. It was the main conduit for the Resilient Families Service Parenting Team and the Talk and Play Team to connect with families and provide information, advice and assistance. The FIS made use of social media to notify parents of information to support them to access a range of services including childcare, play scheme timetables, parenting programmes. This contact with residents was central to the service's ability to maintain engagement with children, young people, parents and families during lockdown. The FIS social media platform played a critical role in enabling us to notify

parents and carers of changes to childcare arrangements, availability of Children and Family Centres and sources of advice and support. It also enabled us to deliver virtual parenting and speech and language support and well as engage children in virtual play opportunities. Our social media platforms were also used to ensure consistent messages were delivered to the public in terms of COVID-19 restrictions, school closures, home to school transport, testing centres to support the priorities of other Council Services such as Test, Trace and Protect, Transport and Education.

Analysis of the online traffic across social media channels during the pandemic showed a significant engagement in online support:

Between April 20 – September 20

- Online parenting videos - 38,523 views / 32,690 unique viewers
- Online early language videos - 44,287 views / 36,040 unique viewers

Changes to the delivery of the FIS were made in 2020/21 including securing agreement from the Chief Executive for the development of the **RCT Families website**, which will encompass the Council's statutory duty to deliver information, advice and assistance through an easy access single portal. The website is due to be launched in Spring 2022. This supports the principles of the Social Services and Well-being Act in empowering service users to use tools provided to meet their own needs.

During the pandemic, the three **Children and Family Centres** were repurposed for both staff and service user use. The sites were used to meet with service users when home visits were not feasible. This allowed key meetings to be held in a Covid-19 safe environment where virtual communication methods would not have been meaningful or would not have reduced the risk to a family/child. In addition, the service was able to maintain statutory duties such as contact centre visits, deliver emergency childcare, support frontline staff working during the pandemic from the safety of the centres.

YEPS has been proactive in **consulting with young people** throughout the pandemic. From seeking opinions during 1:1 sessions to surveys on social media platforms, YEPS staff have been committed to listening to young people to inform service developments.

The **County Youth Forum** was suspended during 2020/21 as a result of the pandemic, however, the locality fora were able to temporarily transition into meaningful consultation and participation events to inform recovery planning. Officers worked to transfer the physical local youth fora into online sessions. The three local youth fora have met 8 times to discuss the concerns young people have

as a result of COVID-19 and the support they would like to see implemented as part of the service's recovery plan. In addition, the fora met with, discussed and contributed towards:

- Votes@16 campaign #yepsisthisyourfirsttime
- Police and Crime Commissioner's "Young Voice Conversation" and the development of their young people's website
- Safer Wales "Champions of Wales" project
- Jigsaw Project, looking at how girls and women have been impacted by COVID-19
- Poetry Project, to create a series of short poems to change the negative views of young people within their wider community.

OBJECTIVE 2 – To reduce inequalities that exist within our communities

Within this equality objective there are a number of areas that require action. The progress towards these actions are outlined below:

Action 1 - A comprehensive review of the recruitment and selection process to increase the diversity of applicants.

A corporate recruitment improvement action plan has been developed with the aim of making our processes more accessible and attractive to job applicants from all backgrounds. The action plan covers the following areas:

- job analysis and job design
- advertising
- applications and selection
- appointment and induction
- alternative recruitment processes
- communication and training
- monitoring and evaluation.

Unfortunately there have been delays with this work, initially due to the pandemic with many key staff being redeployed to help with community support, followed by the implementation of a new HR/Payroll system which has been the priority. In 2020/21 we will be appointing a Graduate Officer to work on areas of this project.

Action 2 - Recommend within the adapted housing review that the Council commits to increasing the number of adapted and accessible homes being built in the area across all tenures.

The Adapted Housing Review provides a position statement on the current services provided or enabled by the Council in relation to adapted housing and the provision of adaptations. The draft RCT Adapted Housing Review makes a number of recommendations aimed at increasing the supply of adapted and accessible homes being built across all tenures. This includes exploring opportunities for the provision of adapted accommodation on Council owned land. This involves working closely with private developers to understand the barriers that exist in developing adapted bungalows on private housing developments and the implementation of new Supplementary Planning Guidance which will require a certain amount of private housing to be adapted or accessible. The review also recommends setting a local target for the number of adapted houses built per annum in the borough, as well as requesting Low Cost Home Ownership bungalows as part of the affordable housing contribution. The RCT Adapted Housing Review will be completed by the end of March 2022.

Action 3 - The implementation of 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.

Our Staying Well at Work (formally Develop Invest & Grow) project is part funded by the European Social Fund and aims to provide support to small businesses and their employees. The support is offered at no cost and focusses on a bespoke range of products to improve employee health and well-being and provide support to businesses to manage employees with disabilities/work limiting health conditions.

The outcomes delivered

Over the course of the project, to the end of the period 100 Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) participants have enrolled with the project, 78 have been through internal compliance checks and are eligible for the project, 22 have been compliance rejected and are therefore ineligible for the project.

78 SME's received direct support from the project up until 31 March 2021, to encourage a cultural change in organisations towards a more diverse and healthy workforce and the adoption of flexible working practices.

Shown in the chart (Table 1a) are the activities undertaken with SME's that have been through internal compliance checks and adopted or improved their strategies and/or monitoring systems.

56 have completed the project and recorded outcomes against the project indicators, 14 were early leavers, and 22 are still actively engaged in the project.

Table 1a

Outcome	Participants
01.Adopt HR H&S Policy for A&W	24
02.Absence Management Policy	25
03.Equality & Diversity Policy	25
04.Sys to Support Flexibility	3
05.Assessment to Monitor H&W	5
06.Pol / Proc Support H&W	23
07.Monitor Work on Health	2
08.Training to Support A&W	9
Early Leaver	14
No Outcome Recorded Yet	22
Total	78

Employee Participant Activity

Over the course of the project, to 31 March 2021, 301 employee participants have enrolled with the project.

359 employee participants have engaged with the project to date. Of those, internal verification checks have been carried out on 318 employee participants who have completed their engagement, 146 have returned to work, 79 have remained in work. Of the 101 early leavers, in the main intervention took place and participants returned to work or remained in work but failed to complete closure project paperwork. The reasons for referral are detailed below in Table 1b and a breakdown of the outcomes recorded are detailed below in Table 1c.

Employee participants 18% declared a disability and 82% a work limiting health condition.

Table 1b Reason for Referral

Reason	%	Participants
In Work Support	25%	76
Support RTW. to Work -28 Days	17%	50
Support Ret. to Work 28 Days+	58%	175
Total	100%	301

Table 1c Outcome

Outcome	%	Participants
Early Leaver	30%	89
NO-RTW 4 wks after completion	6%	19
Remained in Work	17%	52
RTW - Different	1%	2
RTW - Same	45%	136
RTW 4 wks after completion	1%	3
Total	100%	301

Table 1d Characteristic Summary

Participant Breakdown	2020/2021 Cumulative Total	
	Total	%
Disabled/Disability	57	17.9%
Work Limiting Condition (Includes MSD & MH)	261	82.1%
Female	247	77.7%
Male	71	22.3%
Care / Child Responsibilities	91	28.6%
Over 54	124	39.0%
Migrant / Non EU	0	0.0%
BME	2	0.6%
Total Referrals	318	100.0%

Action 4 - To provide accessible information to the public through a variety of formats with a specific focus on improving accessibility of information for the Deaf community.

We offer multi-channel access to information and Council services. This is provided via a range of formats and facilities including:

- Text Phone/Sensory Support Line number promoted via our website
- BSL Interpreters available to attend One4aLL appointments
- Hearing loop systems in place at One4aLL appointment desks
- Enquiries received via the Text Relay Service
- Material available in alternative formats e.g. application forms, consultation documents
- Browsealoud available on our website providing accessibility tools such as:
 - Text to speech (read aloud)
 - Screen mask
 - Text magnifier

- Web page simplifier
- MP3 maker (convert online content to audio)
- Picture dictionary.

During 2020/21 work continued towards meeting Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 web accessibility standards.

Action 5 - Undertake development of the use of assistive technology within the Digital Strategy.

We have continued to provide opportunities for people within our communities and organisation to develop their digital competency, confidence and where necessary provide access to assisted digital support, so that they are better equipped to access and use technology productively.

Those impacted by the pandemic were supported through ICT & Digital for example:

- Working with our partners we supported the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board with a digital solution to manage the vaccination programmes and provided contact centre services.
- Enablement of a Digital Solution to provide a platform to deliver Shielding Support to our community via WCCIS and Web.
- Putting in place a more joined up way for businesses to apply and provide evidence for COVID-19 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 in grants.
- As part of the Welsh Government's ['Hwb' digital Transformation Project](#), we made sure that every school was 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.
- As part of the Council's Digital Strategy 2017-20 work was continually undertaken to support the inclusion agenda, with ICT & Digital playing a key role in supporting key initiatives such as ['Digital Fridays'](#) and [Get online in RCT](#) across our libraries and with services for the housebound.
- To support access to digital inclusion, FREE Public Wi-Fi is provided at approximately 90 Council and community buildings and also at our key [Town Centres](#). Public access PCs are available at several locations such as Libraries, Leisure & Community Centres. All PCs within Libraries will be refreshed with new devices during 2021.

- Our website incorporates elements that support those with visual impairment, content is scanned for errors and reports produced to facilitate their correction. Work to ensure the website meets accessibility [WCAG 2.1 AA compliance](#) continues. Our website accessibility rating has been increased from 68% to 86% on our Corporate Web presence.
- Contact Centre Advisor Services are accessible to customers.

Action 6 - To strengthen existing Homefinder processes to take into account equality and diversity best practice.

This will form part of the Housing Allocation Scheme review as the operational practices will also be reviewed to ensure that they align with the requirements of the scheme.

In 2020/21 a representative from Homefinder attended the Disability Forum to learn about the challenges facing individuals in the area.

Homefinder commenced 'surgeries' in Aberdare Library once a week. The focus was on providing a face-to-face service for individuals wishing to make enquiries directly with an advisor in an accessible space. The aim was to expand this service across the borough, however the pandemic sadly closed many of the offices for a time. We do hope to reintroduce this service when restrictions allow.

Not part of the Homefinder process, but of benefit for the Homefinder Team was the privilege of working with a young person with additional needs from Coleg Y Cymoedd on day placement one afternoon a week. The young person worked as part of the team and gained work experience and independence and the team gained an understanding of the challenges that this young person faced in his daily life.

Action 7 - To further develop an inclusive approach to apprenticeships.

We offer an award winning **apreenticeship scheme**. We have adapted and changed our apprentice assessments to incorporate a 2 level approach, giving equal opportunities to individuals with differing learning needs and in line with the post they are applying for. As a result we have recruited a number of apprentices with additional needs.

Our partnership programme with Coleg y Cymoedd, Elite and Learning Disability Wales has been working with the learners from the **Gateway to Employment 2020** and 2021 cohort. We have delivered a range of employability skills but due to the constraints of the pandemic these have mostly been delivered online. The programme aims to give the learners that are in their last academic year at College a

real insight into future career opportunities; this has been achieved by facilitating visits from employers and undertaking work placements.

Harry from the Gateway to Employment cohort 2020 secured an Apprenticeship with Vision Products at RCT Council and was awarded Gateway to Employment Intern of Year at Employment, Education and Training Team Celebration Event in 2021. You can watch Harry's story at

[Gateway to Employment, Supported Intern of the Year 2021 - YouTube](#)

Action 8 - Strengthen the scrutiny process for the Equality Impact Assessment process.

The Equality Impact Assessment documentation was reviewed to take into account the requirements of the Socio-economic Duty. As part of this review there was an opportunity to strengthen both the Equality Impact Assessment and Welsh Language Impact Assessment. A combined approach was taken to relaunch the impact assessment guidance. In addition a new process 'The Review Panel' was established to strengthen the scrutiny of completed impact assessments. Senior officers from across the Council sit on the Review Panel to review the impact assessment, checking that relevant data and evidence have been used to inform decision making. Agreement has been obtained to recruit a data analyst to support sourcing the relevant evidence for impact assessment documentation. The Cabinet reporting framework has also been enhanced to improve scrutiny of impact assessments.

A number of awareness raising sessions have been held with service areas to outline the requirements of equality duties and Welsh Language standards. The Review Panel was launched in April 2021, therefore progress will be reported in next year's report.

Action 9 - Encourage the uptake of Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement through reviewing service delivery models and an effective marketing strategy.

The 21st Century School Modernisation Programme has included the redesign of secondary school kitchens and dining halls to improve the dining experience and promote learner engagement and attendance. Evidence suggests the investment in school facilities is having a significant impact on the take up of school meals. Planning work has started on the Universal Primary Free School Meal implementation. Catering services are currently reviewing the existing meal provision in each of our primary and special schools and assessing the kitchen equipment and storage facilities in order to estimate the increase in meal numbers and the additional requirements for staff, equipment, storage and dining hall space.

Breakfast service is operational in the majority of secondary schools in order to encourage all pupils to eat a healthy breakfast and help promote early arrival in schools. Pupils FSM allowance is updated at the start of each school day to enable them to access this service.

An extensive choice of menus has been developed to assist in the take up of FSM. Secondary menus have been created with a wide range of products with flexible pricing options which allows pupils to purchase food items during breakfast, morning break and lunchtime. In addition, RCT provide bespoke menus for pupils with allergen requirements, a vegetarian main meal is available daily in all schools and a vegan menu has also been created and is accessible to all pupils on request.

Split lunch services have been implemented in a number of schools, these encourage pupils to eat a healthy lunch by reducing queues and creating a calm, social environment.

Online payments have been implemented in all schools to reduce the requirement of pupils bringing cash to schools. This reduces bullying and ensures that money provided to pupils is actually spent on breakfast or lunch, the use of cashless systems also ensures pupil FSM anonymity.

Action 10 - Take a strategic approach to our town centres which will benefit from investment to ensure an attractive and accessible environment for local businesses, shoppers, residents and visitors.

Prosperity and Development's Service Delivery Plan set out a number of key service priorities for 2020/21, one of which included:

Modernise our town centres by building on their role as centres for social inclusion, local economic opportunity and the provision of services. By recognising their changing role from retail centres to social destinations and helping them to adapt to changes in economic and customers' expectations.

In supporting the delivery of local economic activities whilst promoting social inclusivity the Council have continued to engage with a variety of groups and stakeholders in delivering new projects and initiatives across our town centres and to seek their views on implementing appropriate and timely temporary measures. These measures build on the "Signs & Lines" approach implemented in 2019/20 and continue to safeguard the public amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to changing Welsh Government guidance implemented to help mitigate the risk to public safety by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Council have implemented and where appropriate withdrawn a series of temporary measures across our town centres, these include:

- where necessary, renewal of directional arrows placed on the footways to direct pedestrian movement throughout the town centres.
- where appropriate removal and subsequent reinstatement of some street furniture from town centres.
- signage placed at bus stops / shelters throughout town centres re-enforcing COVID-19 safeguarding measures.
- signage placed on litter bins throughout the town centres re-enforcing social distancing measures.
- timely guidance distributed to businesses located within town centres (and the wider smaller retail areas) outlining their responsibility to implement and review appropriate safeguarding measures.
- administration of a Welsh Government COVID-19 Grant for businesses, enabling internal and external alterations to maximise use of outside space. A similar Valleys Taskforce Grant was also extended to businesses across 28 smaller retail areas within the county borough.
- signage placed at key points throughout town centres promoting a shop local message whilst retaining a strong COVID-19 safeguarding message through a “hands, face, space” approach.

In implementing the above measures the Council has continued to engage positively with a number of stakeholders including town centre businesses and representative groups, Elected Members and the RCT 50+ Forum. This considers the impact of such measures on accessibility and pedestrian movement and has enabled the Council to respond appropriately and considerately. It has also enabled the Council to provide appropriate and timely advice and guidance to businesses, to safeguard employees and customers.

We delivered a comprehensive “shop local” campaign to encourage consumers to utilise local businesses where possible. The campaign was delivered through a mixed approach and included the production of videos showcasing the many products and services on offer within RCT town centres, promotion via the Council’s website and social media platforms, as well as the placement of banners at key locations in and around the town centres. The campaign was also extended to include a more focused campaign to deliver a “shop local at Christmas” message.

We hosted a Santa’s Grotto within town centres enabling individuals and families to receive a positive experience within a managed environment, that complied with COVID-19 guidance. The grotto’s were well attended and positively received.

Following a successful launch of the **Hop, Shop and Save Scheme** in 2019, the Council has continued to work in partnership with Stagecoach South Wales to further develop and promote the scheme. The scheme enables Stagecoach passengers to receive a discount on a range of products and services across RCT town centres, upon the production of a valid bus ticket. The scheme is available for all residents of RCT, including those with a “bus pass” and with many older people and disabled people relying on a bus pass to travel to be able to access town centres, the scheme has continued to be popular.

We have continued to work collaboratively with business groups and other stakeholders to deliver a range of projects that improve the “look and feel” of our town centres. These include the installation of new public benches and free standing flower planters throughout Aberdare town centre and the development of an area of land adjacent to the Parc & Dare Theatre in Treorchy to provide additional public and community space.

Utilising the Welsh Government’s Transforming Towns Business Fund, the Council have worked collaboratively with town centre business groups to develop and deliver a range of projects aimed at improving and promoting the town centre offer. These include the production of town centre specific promotional videos, a facility providing test trading opportunities and piloting of alternative town centre data collection provisions to inform future strategic decisions.

OBJECTIVE 3 – TO PROMOTE SAFE COMMUNITIES

Within this equality objective there are a number of areas that require action. The progress towards these actions are outlined below.

Action 1 - Review, develop and re-implement the Hate Crime Strategy.

The Crown Prosecution Service defines a Hate Crime as:

“hate crime’ can be used to describe a range of criminal behavior where the perpetrator is motivated by hostility or demonstrates hostility towards the victim’s disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or transgender identity.

These aspects of a person’s identity are known as ‘protected characteristics’. A hate crime can include verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, harassment, assault and bullying, as well as damage to property. The perpetrator can also be a friend, carer or acquaintance who exploits their relationship with the victim for financial gain or some other criminal purpose.”

During 2020, 465 hate crimes were recorded in the Cwm Taf area (Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil).

The tables below show the breakdown across the 5 characteristics, area and month:

Table 1a. Hate Crimes by characteristic

Disability	64
Race	271
Religion	15
Sexual Orientation	98
Transgender	17

Table 1b. Hate Crimes by area

Rhondda	117
Cynon	90
Taf	134
Merthyr	105

Table 1c. Hate Crimes by month (2019)

January	28
February	25
March	33
April	31
May	38
June	57
July	48
August	43
September	53
October	39
November	31
December	20

Tackling Hate Crime in Rhondda Cynon Taf

We have continued to work closely with partner agencies including South Wales Police (SWP). Increased partnership working has enabled us to ensure that residents get a positive and consistent response.

National Hate Crime Awareness Week (NHCAW)

A series of 5 videos have been produced, one for each protected characteristic. They were released on social media (one per day) throughout NHCAW on the Council's, Merthyr Tydfil Council's and South Wales Police social media pages (Facebook and Twitter) and their respective websites as well as being shared by a number of other outlets including the local radio station social media pages. The videos were very well received by the public, being viewed by thousands of social media users throughout the week.

- Race – <https://youtu.be/BXgT19Echy4>
- Disability – <https://youtu.be/V147ZhuDcgc>
- Gender Identity – <https://youtu.be/8SqsTGloKZc>
- Sexual Orientation – <https://youtu.be/leS9vj20qKI>
- Religion – <https://youtu.be/Ugy6NkANnDY>

Cwm Taf Community Cohesion Officers and South Wales Police Community Safety Officers undertook interviews with local radio station GTFM to promote NHCAW to educate listeners about Hate Crime and provide information about how to report Hate Crime and where to access support.

Hate Crime Awareness Training

During the relaxation of the restrictions two Hate Crime awareness sessions were delivered to local primary school pupils.

Action 2 - Review the existing approach to tackling modern slavery.

Training on modern day slavery (including train the trainer) was due to be delivered in April 2020 by BAWSO. This sadly had to be rearranged to a later date. Modern day slavery continues to be discussed within the virtual Serious Organised Crime Board.

Action 3 - As part of Education's Well-being Strategy we will develop a programme for schools about raising awareness of emotional abuse in relationships.

The Senior Educational Psychologist for Well-being is working with Barnardos, the Police and Education representatives to develop a programme of support for schools. Project development will continue next year.

Action 4 - Pilot the PERMA model in secondary schools.

Embedded in Positive Psychology, Seligman's PERMA model is suggested as an effective framework for understanding and promoting well-being. Furthermore, PERMA tools are suggested as an easily understood measure which can assess various dimensions of pupil well-being and can account for fluctuations in well-being over time.

According to Seligman's PERMA model:

- **Positive emotions** refer to hedonic feelings of happiness (e.g. feeling joyful, content, and cheerful).
- **Engagement** refers to psychological connection to activities or organisations (e.g. feeling absorbed, interested, and engaged in life).
- **Relationships** include feeling socially integrated, cared about and supported by others, and satisfied with one's social connections.
- **Meaning** refers to believing that one's life is valuable and feeling connected to something greater than oneself.
- **Accomplishment** involves making progress toward goals, feeling capable to do daily activities, and having a sense of achievement.

Seligman proposes that these five pillars contribute to individual well-being.

- 80 schools are now registered and have been set-up to use the PERMA tools.
- 2 hour virtual training sessions have been conducted with all schools to complete the registration process and to demonstrate and discuss how the tools can be used in their setting.
- Pre-recorded training videos have also been developed and uploaded to support schools in using the products.
- Whole School training is due to be delivered via webinar and pre-recorded e-learning content.
- User guides and starter packs have been disseminated to every school following their registration.
- An initial training evaluation has been completed with each school to identify their perception of the products and how they intend to use them in their setting.

Action 5 - Strengthen collection and analysis of data for bullying incidents in schools.

The Access and Inclusion local authority Anti-Bullying Policy has been amended in line with the Welsh Government statutory guidance, Rights, Respect and Equalities. The updated RCT policy clarifies and strengthens expectations and processes in relation to data collection and analysis of bullying – particularly in relation to protected characteristics. The LA responsibilities within the revised guidance are to:

- Analyse the data from schools and identify patterns and trends and provide information to schools to ensure they are prepared to be responsive to trends.
- Have a specific focus on accurate recording of prejudice-related incidents to enable monitoring of patterns and prevent discrimination to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Monitor equality data and advise schools on local trends.

We require schools to provide a report of bullying incidents to us on a termly basis. We monitor the reports and provide support and challenge to schools to address issues. The next step is to improve practice through training and advice. Implicit in the updated policy is the need for more regular review and monitoring processes in the schools. The updated policy provides a document for all schools to use on the SIMS system which will support the collection of necessary data. The policy states that:

Governing bodies should monitor:

- an overview of recorded bullying incidents in their setting to see how long it takes on average for cases to be resolved
- the recurrence rates
- whether learners who have reported bullying incidents believe they got a satisfactory outcome
- whether there are any emerging trends or groups being discriminated against
- whether there are online cases that suggest work is required with the learners, parents/carers and staff to counter new forms of bullying
- absenteeism rates
- that the regularly collected data on reported incidents is showing progress towards the equality objectives.

Action 6 - Further develop the freedom programme with Women's Aid to better understand specific needs for victims of domestic violence from underrepresented groups.

The SAFE Project

Identifying domestic abuse at the earliest opportunity is key to keeping people safe. The SAFE project provides an accessible service based within the local community to support those who have experienced or are currently experiencing domestic violence and are identified through risk assessment or Public Protection Notices (PPN) as low to medium risk. The project aims to increase the opportunities available to victims of domestic violence by implementing early intervention and prevention strategies. The services provided by the project build capacity by increasing the service user's skills to identify the early warning signs of abusive behaviours within current or future relationships, increase their confidence and self-esteem and reduce isolation.

The project delivers this in a variety of ways including;

- One to one support / advocacy (short term)
- Life skills sessions including domestic abuse awareness programme and confidence building.
- Direct referral pathways to other support agencies.
- Access to legal advice and debt management surgeries.

The project enables victims of domestic violence to access information and support in a friendly and supportive environment and aims to reduce the risk to the individual, increase safety, prevent further crime, and keep people safe in their own homes – breaking the cycle of domestic abuse.

Group programmes

At the start of quarter 1 in 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the way in which the project could deliver its services. The adaptations included a reduction in face-to-face and group working sessions.

As a result, all educational, trauma informed, domestic abuse, educational sessions, such as the freedom programme, recovery toolkit, hope to recovery and well-being sessions were delivered online.

In total, 213 victims were supported to complete domestic abuse educational programmes.

Their feedback tells us that:

- 95% stated they were able to recognise the early warning signs of abusive behaviour and felt they had increased ability to keep safe within their relationships.
- 89% stated that they felt increased confidence in their ability to create a safe environment for themselves and their family.
- 100% stated an increased knowledge of appropriate agencies from which they could receive support for their emotional and physical well-being.
- 90% stated they felt an increase in their confidence and self-esteem as a result of attending the sessions.

Individual support

During the year 322 victims required additional individual support sessions. During these sessions our team were able to support victims to identify need and reduce risk through risk assessments and safety planning.

Surgeries

Throughout the year 74 victims required legal advice regarding their situations. The project supported them to access free 20-minute consultations with a solicitor within their local area.

Equality Monitoring Data

This data refers to 512 clients supported.

Sex

502 identified as female
 7 identified as male
 2 identified as transgender.

Ethnicity

African - 3
 Black other - 6
 Chinese - 4
 Indian - 8
 Mixed race – 27
 White British – 153
 White Welsh – 310

Age

16 – 21	32
21 – 30	125
31 – 40	117

41 – 50	96
51 – 60	65
61 – 70	52
71 – 80	22
81 – 90	3

Geographical Location

275 Pontypridd / Taf
236 Cynon.

OBJECTIVE 4 – TO REDUCE THE GENDER PAY GAP

Within this equality objective there are a number of areas that require action. The progress towards these actions are outlined below.

The Gender Pay Gap

An organisation's gender pay gap is the difference between the average male and female pay rates. It is calculated by dividing the average female hourly pay rate by the average male hourly pay rate.

The Council is required to publish the gender pay gap between male and female employees. It is also required to publish this data separately on employees in Education (teaching employees).

The Equality and Human Rights Commission strongly advise publishing separate full-time and part-time gender pay gaps. It is considered that any pay gap of 5% or more is considered significant and in need of further analysis.

The Equal Pay Audit identified the following Equal Pay gaps:

2021

	Combined	Full Time	Part Time
All Employees	10.45%	-12.21%	7.03%
Non Teaching	11.37%	-10.23%	3.69%
Teaching	5.04%	3.87%	11.77%

The mean gender pay gap is the difference between the mean hourly rate of pay of male full-pay relevant employees and that of female full-pay relevant employees. A positive figure denotes a gap to the advantage of male employees. A negative figure denotes a gap to the advantage of female employees.

There has been no significant changes to the gender pay gap for March 2021.

Action 1 - Deliver the roll out of the performance review process for staff at all grades.

The Council's new performance review process for staff is being incrementally rolled-out to ensure effective implementation and understanding. Roll-out has been undertaken for Chief Officer post holders and for staff on Grades 11 to 15. Embedding the new performance review process and focusing on compliance has been the focus this year and has unfortunately delayed further roll-out to all staff. However service areas are continuing to use the previous performance review processes with their staff not on the grades mentioned above, although central monitoring for this is not undertaken.

We will continue to roll-out the revised performance reviews Council wide, with particular attention to ensuring that staff without access to work IT and no Council email address have a performance review.

Action 2 - Improve the monitoring of the performance review process.

As part of the new performance review process we monitor compliance, the training needs analysis and we review the process which includes obtaining feedback from managers and staff. We will continue to develop the monitoring process during further roll-out of the process.

Action 3 - Better understand whether barriers exist regarding the progression of women into senior positions.

Following feedback from our female staff we are exploring how we can encourage more women to apply for senior roles. We are developing a Women in Leadership Programme which aims to remove barriers to progression. The programme aims to provide a platform for women throughout the Council, regardless of role or job grade to embrace these unique skills, inspiring and empowering them to grow and develop to break through the 'glass ceiling'. The programme will be launched in 2021/22 where we will host a number of events that will look at barriers, dispelling commonly held myths and will look to generate inspiring discussion around women developing and bringing fresh insights to the table. The overarching aim is to create a culture shift by implementing initiatives such as mentoring, coaching and establishing networking opportunities, enabling women to feel confident and able to progress onto the next stage of their career within the Council.

Action 4 - Understand more about what prevents women returning to the workplace following maternity leave.

A research study was completed which provided a better understanding into the barriers to retention following maternity leave. The study explored social and organisational barriers that contribute to the issue. The recommendations of the study included:

- Undertake further organisational research particularly with women who have returned to work following maternity leave
- Increase awareness and support for women going on maternity leave
- Review and improve monitoring processes
- Provide opportunities for exit interviews.

Action 5 - Support the EHRC pledge 'Working Forward' and implement its recommendations.

Due to a number of factors which impact on the resources available to undertake this work it is likely this work will be carried over to the next Strategic Equality Plan in 2023.

OBJECTIVE 5 – TO CREATE AN INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE

Within this equality objective there are a number of areas that require action. The progress towards these actions are outlined below:

Action 1 - Develop a programme of sexual harassment training and awareness.

Unfortunately work in this area has not yet commenced due to priorities shifting due to the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement. We hope to commence this work in 2021/22. It is clear though that any work will now also have to take into account sexual harassment in the digital environment as many of our staff now work from home on a regular basis.

Action 2 - Undertake a review of all our mental health activities and develop annual plans which provide education, training and interventions.

We have undertaken several reviews of mental health activities and these are ongoing however, the pandemic has meant that these plans had to be adjusted in order to support the workforce throughout the pandemic.

We have consulted with the Senior Leadership Team, Senior Management Teams, trades unions, managers and staff throughout the organisation on a range of matters

such as the requirement for mental health training. We have introduced a range of activities in education, training and interventions for staff well-being including mental health.

These include:

- Mental health awareness training match funded by the Council and Welsh Union Learning funding. We continue to develop this each year.
- Over 600 managers attended mental health awareness training.
- 2 pilot groups for i-act mental health awareness training for staff was attended by 30 staff.
- The 'Pandemic and Beyond' series was developed and delivered over 5 modules looking at individual and team impact on mental health and psychological safety. Over 400 staff attended these sessions.
- The introduction of a confidential staff well-being software called Cari which provides staff and the organisation with an overall well-being score. Staff can access support and interventions through their Cari account.
- A staff well-being line was set up to support staff throughout the pandemic giving staff access to:
 - keyworker testing
 - self-referral for well-being assessments
 - self-referral for physiotherapy
 - a listening ear.
- Well-being assessments were introduced in Occupational Health to assess an individual's need, then refer into the most appropriate support.
- We introduced a bespoke school counselling service for all teachers.
- 600 Additional hours for counselling were provided.

Action 3 - Source and develop a suite of training for managers on equality and diversity topics.

Work commenced on this project this year and is due to be completed in 2021/22. A number of suitable e-learning courses have been identified and tested and discussions have taken place with the People Development Team regarding their roll-out across the Council. The internal learning platform 'RCT Source' will support the training material and a Diversity and Inclusion section has been developed to support staff learning with additional information and resources.

Action 4 - Become more disability confident as an organisation.

We continued to meet our responsibilities under the '[Disability Confident](#)' Scheme so that as an employer we make the most of the talents disabled people can bring. Examples of how we do this include:

- Providing support for dyslexic and neurodiverse colleagues via 'Read&Write' software. Key officers have received training in this software in order to advise other members of staff how to use the tools.
- Reviewing key accessibility policy and guidelines like the 'See it Right' guide. Since the transition to work from home during the pandemic, online and e-communication has become more and more prevalent. The guidance now contains information on contrast, colour usage, font and text size, as well as accessibility tips and features included in Microsoft products like Word and Teams.
- Electing a Senior Diversity Champion for Disability. The Senior Champion is a direct link for our Disability and Carers Staff Network to contact our Senior Leadership Team to share priorities and concerns. This representation and support from the Senior Leadership Team is vital to accessibility awareness and improvement.
- Raising awareness of disability awareness via internal staff communications.
- Working with the Business Disability Forum (BDF) to become a Disability Smart organisation. Criteria that needs to be met is in line with the Disability Confident Scheme, so will develop the Council in both areas.
- Keeping the HR Team updated with relevant disability awareness webinars and training.
- Proposal for Council service areas to become Autism Aware.

Action 5 - Undertake workplace equality monitoring.

As previously outlined in this report, an equality monitoring toolkit has been developed which highlights the best practice equality monitoring questions that should be completed by staff. Internally, equality monitoring data is vital to examine the Council's progress concerning its legal duties and equality objectives. It helps us to identify gaps and trends and consequently we can develop action plans to address those gaps.

The Council is implementing a new HR and Payroll system, unfortunately due to a number of factors the implementation date has been shifted to November 2021. This is a significant project covering all workforce data. The best practice equality monitoring fields outlined in the toolkit will be added onto this system. This provides us with an opportunity to collect data on characteristics such as non-binary identities. This is something which we have not been in a position to do previously due to

development limitations in the current system. Following implementation of the new system there will be a push to obtain up-to-date staff information.

Action 6 - Replicate existing good practice to reflect all protected characteristics.

In 2020/21 the Council marked a number of significant days either by raising awareness through articles and blogs on its internal intranet and with staff networks or by holding awareness raising events. Articles were written about the following, they appear in date order:

- International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia
- Mental Health Awareness Week
- Statement response to the death of George Floyd
- Reserves Day
- Pride Cymru
- World Suicide Prevention Day
- Bi Visibility Day
- Black History Month
- International Day of Older Persons
- Dyslexia Awareness Week
- Baby Loss Awareness Week
- World Mental Health Day
- World Menopause Day
- Men's Mental Health Month
- Trans Awareness Week and Trans Day of Remembrance
- International Day of People with Disabilities
- Welsh Language Rights Day
- Holocaust Memorial Day
- LGBT+ History Month
- Time to Talk Day
- Zero Discrimination Day
- International Women's Day
- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

In addition to the above, a number of events were held across the Council to raise awareness and promote diversity and inclusion.

Men's Mental Health Month

For Men's Mental Health Month we felt it was important for staff to know they work in a safe and supportive environment and asked staff to help break the stigma. We did this by producing 3 short videos from male members of staff, including one of our Senior Managers, talking about their own experiences of mental health and why it's so important to seek help or talk about it. This was an incredibly powerful campaign and we have also shared these videos via our newsletter and intranet for all staff to access. This is [Paul's story](#)

Time to Talk Day

Time to Talk Day in February provided a focus for staff across the Council to have conversations about mental health without being judged. For 'Time to Talk' day this year we encouraged staff to bring the conversation into routine team meetings or to create a catch up via Microsoft Teams, whilst so many of us are working from home due to the pandemic. We shared resources to help staff such as a digital screen background to use in online meetings, posters and banners and numbers to call if you need specific help or further support.

Proud Councils

RCT lead 'Proud Council's'; a network of South Wales based local authorities in promoting and achieving an inclusive workplace and community for all LGBT+ people. This year we supported a virtual Pride Cymru event, which was a panel debate that was accessed by hundreds of people across the UK.

We created a digital calendar of events for LGBT+ History Month to highlight all the events and activities that were available during the month and we also organised events and resources ourselves. This included a lecture on LGBT+ Global Issues by Coleg y Cymoedd, a Workshop from the Author Norena Shopland, working in partnership with Cynon Valley Museum, and an online event run by RCT and Cardiff Council's Staff Networks.

Race Equality

The current Strategic Equality Plan does not feature a specific objective on Race Equality. Since the tragic killing of George Floyd and the subsequent Black Lives Matter campaign we acknowledged we needed to focus on Race Equality within the Council. To support this work we have appointed a Graduate Officer to work to develop this. We used positive action in the appointment of this role. We have established a Staff Network 'Spotlight' who are providing us with the lived experience of being a Black member of staff in the workplace and community. 'Spotlight'

members have identified a number of workplace areas that we need to focus on e.g. policy.

Education colleagues have also established a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Working Group, and have commissioned a research project looking at the experience of Black pupils in our secondary schools.

In March we signed the Zero Racism Wales pledge which was launched on the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This demonstrates our commitment to take a stand against racism.

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD)

For HMD 2021, due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the public and Council staff were asked to spend some time on the day, in the safety of their own homes and workplaces, reflecting on the atrocities of the worst time in world history in which millions of people were brutally killed at the hands of Nazi Germany, and the subsequent genocides.

International Women's Day

We hosted a virtual event for International Women's Day themed around 'Choose to Challenge'. The event was a discussion about stereotypes, discrimination and women's experiences in work. Our guest speaker, [Georgina Gilbert](#), a firefighter with over 20 years' experience, co-founder of the [Antarctic Fire Angels](#) and inspirational speaker for [Ordinary Extraordinary](#), spoke about her story and breaking down barriers in gender inequality.

Staff Networks

Our staff networks have continued to grow and develop and they played an instrumental role in providing peer support during the pandemic. Network meetings went on-line and this encouraged greater attendance with more regular meet ups. All of our networks, Allies, Disability and Carers and Perthyn, our LGBTQ+ staff network help promote and raise awareness of specific days to all staff to help create a better culture in the workplace.

At the end of 2020 we also launched Spotlight, our staff network for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff. The Council employs small numbers of this group. It is therefore essential that we understand their experience of being a minority in the workplace.

LGBTQ+ inclusion

The Council continues to be recognised as an inclusive employer by ranking in [Stonewall's Top 100](#) employers in 2020, demonstrating our commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusivity. Due to the pandemic there was no submission for 2021 but we endeavour to continue our good work in creating an inclusive workplace for all of our LGBTQ+ staff and service users.

In 2019 we were able to consult with the public at Rhondda Pride, where we identified some gaps in support for schools. Although we have been challenged with the pandemic and its effect on schools, we have still been able to offer support to schools to ensure our LGBT+ pupils feel more supported. We have worked closely with the Education Department to create LGBT+ specific resources to better educate teaching staff to feel confident to support and teach pupils on these specific topics. As part of our Stonewall Diversity Champion membership we have also been able to offer free training courses to our schools in regards to supporting LGBTQ+ pupils with mental health and other specific challenges and issues they might face.

An LGBTQ+ Education working group has been set up to ensure resources and communication, between different services across the Council, is more effective in regards to supporting young people and children who access services or attend any of our schools.

We have focused on LGBTQ+ inclusion within RCT by raising awareness and promoting specific campaigns and days that specifically raise awareness and acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community.

We have also run events to raise awareness, for example we organised specific events throughout LGBT+ History Month, some for internal staff only and others open to the community.

We have consulted with our LGBTQ+ staff network and decided to raise the Progress Flag on LGBTQ+ specific days across the Council. We have an LGBTQ+ Progress Flag flying at Llys Cadwyn in Pontypridd for the majority of the year to show how important we feel about LGBTQ+ inclusion in the Council. We will also be raising the trans, bi and Progress flag for all buildings across the Council to raise on specific days and events to ensure people can see that we recognise that some groups within the LGBTQ+ community can face more discrimination than others.

We have offered webinars and free events to our staff in relation to Bi Visibility and other LGBTQ+ topics and shared resources.

Overall Progress

The Council has made significant progress in many of the equality objectives. It is noted that some have not yet commenced and progress in these will be monitored in future annual reports. This report reflects the period of the initial lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as such progress on some projects had been delayed due to the pandemic response. However, due to the pandemic, much positive and innovative work has been done to improve the accessibility and inclusion of the services we provide across the borough.

Our work to deliver equality objectives contained in our Strategic Equality Plan 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.

7. Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's)

The Council has had an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process in place for a number of years which is carried out under the following circumstances:

- Where new policies or practices are developed (including corporate plans, annual business plans and the annual budget);
- Where changes to existing policies or practices are proposed, and when conducting expenditure reviews and programme evaluations;
- Where there are proposals to withdraw from or discontinue an existing policy or practice;
- Where the Business Planning process has identified relevance to or implications for equality.

The process is regularly reviewed and takes into account the protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010.

The Council introduced a screening process in January 2012 which is designed to make the process as effective as possible and to ensure that any information gathered at the screening stage can be used if a full EIA is required. However, the Council automatically carries out a full EIA on its Change proposals process.

The table below includes a snapshot of EIA's carried out in 2020/21.

Equality Impact Assessments

Policy/Procedure	Date
------------------	------

Proposed Extension and Variation to the Borough's Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Orders	June 2020
Safer Places – Social Distances in Town Centres and Public Places during Coronavirus	June 2020
Modernisation of the Council's Residential Care Home Service for Older People	December 2020
21 st Century Schools Programme – Proposals to Improve Education Provision for Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llyn-Y-Forwyn	January 2021
21 st Century Schools Programme – Update on the Proposals to Improve Education Provision in the Cynon Valley	February 2021
The Council's 2021-2022 Revenue Budget Strategy	February 2021
The Council's 3 Years Capital Programme 2021/22 – 2023/24 Incorporating a Review of Earmarked Reserves	February 2021

Full details of decisions are included in Cabinet reports which are available on the following link:

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Committees/Committees.aspx>

8. Employment Monitoring Data

The Council must collect and publish on an annual basis the number of:

- people employed by the authority on 31 March each year by protected characteristic;
- men and women employed, broken down by:
 - job;
 - grade (where grading system in place);
 - pay;
 - contract type (including permanent and fixed term contracts);
 - working pattern (including full-time, part-time and other flexible working patterns).
- people who have applied for jobs with the authority over the last year;
- employees who have applied to change position within the authority; identifying how many were successful in their application and how many were not;
- employees who have applied for training and how many succeeded in their application;

- employees who completed training;
- employees involved in grievance procedures either as a complainant or as a person against whom a complaint was made;
- employees subject to disciplinary procedures;
- employees who have left an authority's employment.

All of the information above must be presented for each of the separate protected groups. The exception to this requirement is the data on job, grade, pay, contract type and working pattern, which must be broken down only in relation to women and men.

This information is attached at Appendix 1 - Employment Monitoring Data.

9. Procurement

The Council operates the SQuID which is part of the National Procurement Website, www.Sell2Wales.co.uk.

It contains a set of core questions commonly asked at the selection stage and has a database of suppliers' answers stored for re-use, and a tool for buyers to generate a selection questionnaire using a risk-based wizard for each procurement project. The idea is that working together these three things deliver a number of benefits:

- Increased efficiency for both suppliers and buyers, by allowing standard questions and answers to be stored for future use, by keeping the number of questions to a minimum, and also by encouraging buyers to only seek information from suppliers if they can be clear about exactly how the information will be used;
- Greater standardisation of the selection stage, whilst also allowing for tailoring of questions to meet the specific requirements of the procurement;
- Increased transparency of the selection process and how responses will be evaluated – so that suppliers are able to work out easily whether or not they wish to bid for a particular opportunity, how to optimise their proposal and how to present it in an effective way;
- Improved opportunities for small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) and local businesses to compete on a more equal footing as a result of a carefully considered question set that removes some of the barriers to entry for them.

It includes a section on equal opportunities and is in line with the guidance on procurement published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission at <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/wales/>

10. Accessible Information

The Council produces information in a wide variety of formats according to need. Service areas record requests for alternative formats from service users to ensure that these are provided.

Accessibility Guidelines are available to employees on the Council's Intranet, these provide information on the types of accessible information available, what it is and does and includes a list of suppliers so that employees can source requested formats.

The Council has adopted the RNIB Clear Print Guidelines to increase readability of its documents.

11. Future Work

We will work towards further embedding and achieving the actions as outlined in the [Strategic Equality Plan Action Plan 2019-2022](#). Next year it will be important that we respond to emerging issues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement.

12. Contact Details

Rhondda Cynon Taf welcomes comments on all aspects of this report, both in what it contains and what it may not make clear enough about the work and progress in delivering equality and removing discrimination.

If you have any comments or want to know more about the work the Council is doing please contact:

Melanie Warburton
Diversity and Inclusion Manager
Rhondda Cynon Taf Council
Ty Elai
Dinas Isaf East Industrial Estate
Williamstown
Tonypandy
CF40 1NY

Telephone: 01443 444531

email: equality@rctcbc.gov.uk

Employment Monitoring Data

Equality monitoring information is stored against all employees' records in the Council's payroll and human resources information system (Vision). The information is requested at the recruitment stage and entered on to their record at that point.

The Council encourages all employees to provide this information and an equality monitoring survey is carried out on all employees every two years in an attempt to increase the information held.

In preparation for the extended employee monitoring requirements being introduced as part of the Equality Act 2010, the Council carried out an equality monitoring survey of all employees in 2011. This survey included questions that covered all protected characteristics except pregnancy. This question was not asked as it was felt that information on pregnancy and maternity would already be held on employee records and the time period allowed for return could mean that the information provided would be out of date.

The Equality and Diversity Team worked with other service areas to identify other useful information which resulted in the questionnaire including sections on the use of British Sign Language, Welsh language ability and whether or not an employee had caring responsibilities. This information was provided statistically to the service areas to inform their work and strategies.

Statistical analysis of the information is contained in the following tables and covers all Council employees including teachers and school based employees.

People Employed by Protected Characteristic

The following information has been provided using employees' national insurance numbers; this ensures that where an employee may work in more than one job their details will be included only once to avoid duplication of information. It includes teachers and school based employees. Some comparisons will be made to the local demographic of the borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf as over 80% of employees live in the Council area.

Gender

The table below shows the gender breakdown of employees:

Gender	Total	% of Workforce
Male	2781	25.5%

Female	8123	74.5%
Total	10904	100.0%

This table clearly indicates that women make up the majority of the Council workforce, this has been consistent for a number of years.

Age

The table below shows the breakdown of employees by age group:

Age Group	Total	% of Workforce
16-24	614	5.6%
25-34	1944	17.8%
35-44	2580	23.7%
45-54	3117	28.6%
55-64	2261	20.7%
65+	388	3.6%
Total	10904	100.0%

This table indicates, as the figures did last year, that over half of Council employees are within the age range of 35-54.

Disability

The table below shows the breakdown of employees by disabled and non disabled:

Identification	Total	% of Workforce
Disabled	209	1.9%
Non Disabled	8800	80.7%
Prefer not to say	21	0.2%
Information not held	1874	17.2%
Total	10904	100.0%

Information is held on 83% of employees. A small percentage of employees have indicated that they are disabled but this is unlikely to give the true picture of disability in the workplace. Although the staff equality profile questionnaire gives the definition of disability, some employees with a 'defined' disability may not choose to identify as having a disability.

National Identify and Ethnicity

The table below shows the breakdown of employees by ethnicity:

Ethnicity	Number
Asian	8
Asian British	2
Asian Chinese	4
Asian Cornish	1
Asian Indian	6
Asian Pakistani	1
Asian Other	4
Black	4
Black African	7
Black British	4
Black Other	2
Chinese	4
Mixed Other	14
Mixed White & Asian	2
Mixed White & Black African	2
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	5
Other	26
Prefer not to say	17
White	4789
White British	2086
White Cornish	1
White English	37
White Irish	10
White Other	21
White Scottish	10
White Welsh	1749
Not Known	2088
Total	10904

The demographic of Rhondda Cynon Taf is 2%* of people identify themselves with an ethnicity other than White British, Welsh, English or Scottish.

*statswales.gov.wales at 30 June 2019

The table below shows the breakdown of employees by national identity:

National Identity	Number of Employees
African	4
Any Other Asian Background	2
Any Other Mixed Background	2
Any Other White Background	10
Bangladeshi	1
British	1317
Caribbean	1
Chinese	4
English	188
European	14

Indian	4
Irish	16
Other	5
Scottish	22
Welsh	4220
White and Asian	4
White and Black Caribbean	1
Not Known	5089
Total	10904

Information is held on 53% of employees with the majority of employees identifying themselves as Welsh followed by British.

Religion or Belief

The table below shows the breakdown of employees by religion or belief:

Religion	Total
Christian	2657
Muslim	14
Hindu	7
Buddhist	12
Sikh	2
Other	102
% of workforce identifying with a religion	25.6%
None	2857
Prefer not to say	338
Information not held	4915
Total	10904

Information is held on 55% of employees with the predominant faith being Christian.

Sexual Orientation

The table below shows the breakdown of employees by sexual orientation:

Sexual Orientation	Total
Heterosexual	3854
Gay Man	37
Gay Woman/Lesbian	40
Bisexual	25
% of workforce identifying a sexual orientation	36.3%
Prefer not to say	223
Information not held	6725
Total	10904

Information is held on 38% of employees. This is the same as reported last year. As part of the Stonewall Diversity Champion's Programme, work has and will continue to encourage more employees to complete this category on equality monitoring forms.

Pregnancy and Maternity

As at 31 March 2021 there were 132 employees on maternity. During the year 2020/21, 307 employees had been on maternity leave during this period of time.

Gender Reassignment

Specific information has not been published due to the possibility of identification. The Council has a Gender Reassignment Policy in place which was developed some years ago as a result of an employee asking for support. Since that time the policy has been accessed and support provided as and when required by employees.

Regulation Nine – Gender Specific Information

Regulation Nine of the Specific Equality Duties in Wales requires the following specific information to be provided in respect of gender breakdown.

The number of employees employed as at 31 March 2020 broken down by:

- Job
- Grade
- Pay
- Contract type
- Working pattern.

This information has been provided on the basis of actual job numbers so that those employees who work in more than one job are included in all the jobs they are employed in so the numbers may be different to those in the previous section. Once again the information includes teachers and school based employees.

The following table/s provides the specific information required:

Breakdown of Employees by Gender and Job

There are over a thousand job titles within the Council so for ease of demonstration they have been broken down into job families within the competency framework.

Job Family	Female	Male	Total
Administrator	917	264	1181
Ancillary	1512	497	2009
Assistant Headteacher	38	32	70
Community and Social Care	1383	264	1647
Deputy Headteacher	70	47	117
Frontline and Customer Care	366	282	648
Headteacher	83	38	121
Middle Manager	165	85	250
School Support	1489	85	1574
Skilled Manual Worker	32	123	155
Strategic Manager	31	40	71
Supervisor	168	210	378
Teacher	1345	395	1740
Technical, Specialist & Professional	484	402	886
Unqualified Teacher	40	17	57
Total	8123	2781	10904

As last year, the data provides very little surprises with the majority of women working in 'traditional' female areas, particularly in the Community & Social Care, Ancillary and School Support settings; this will be more closely examined as part of the Gender Pay Objective within the Strategic Equality Plan.

Breakdown of Employees by Gender & Grade

The Council operated the following grading systems as at 31 March 2021:

- Chief Officers (Head of Service and above)
- National Joint Council
- Teachers/Education

The tables below set out the breakdown of employees by gender and grade:

Employees by Gender & Grade – Chief Officers

Grade	Female	Male	Total
Chief Executive	0	1	1
Group Director	0	2	2

Director Level 1	0	2	2
Director Level 2	3	5	8
Service Director Level 1	1	2	3
Service Director Level 2	3	7	10
Head of Service Level 1	12	8	20
Head of Service Level 2	4	6	10
Total	23	33	56

There has been no significant change since the previous year, whereby the majority of Chief Officer posts are held by males. Those held by females are largely on the lower Chief Officer grades.

Employees by Gender and Grade – National Joint Council

Grade	Female	Male	Total
GR1	252	65	317
GR2	836	44	880
GR3	480	141	621
GR4	868	233	1101
GR5	789	422	1211
GR6	1151	334	1485
GR7	561	158	719
GR8	293	127	420
GR9	272	146	418
GR10	243	179	422
GR11	320	130	450
GR12	153	66	219
GR13	113	57	170
GR14	13	12	25
GR15	54	35	89
Total	6398	2149	8547

This information indicates that while 74.5% of the total Council workforce is female, it is females that dominate the lower pay grades. This will be an area that will be looked at within the Gender Pay objective in the Strategic Equality Plan.

Employees by Gender and Grade – Teachers/Education

Grade	Female	Male	Total
Education Psychologists and Advisers	89	28	117
Leadership Group/Headteachers	81	38	119
Deputy & Assistant Headteachers	134	87	221
Teachers	1357	402	1759

Total	1661	555	2216
--------------	-------------	------------	-------------

The figures above indicate that females make up 75% of the education profession.

Individual salary grades of Education staff is complex to summarise but on analysis there is a fairly even split of male/female across all salary points with no obvious discrepancies in respect of ability to move through the grades. The grades and salary points are based on nationally agreed pay scales and there are specific requirements for each grade and how employees move through them.

Employees by Contract Type/Working Pattern

Contract Type	Female	Male	Total
Permanent Full Time	2572	1879	4451
Permanent Part Time	1582	231	1813
Permanent Part Time Term Time	2154	83	2237
Permanent Term Time	134	25	159
Temporary Full Time	373	213	586
Temporary Part Time	138	43	181
Temporary Part Time Term Time	490	55	545
Temporary Term Time	13	3	16
Casuals	667	249	916
Total	8123	2781	10904

For permanent members of staff the breakdown of female/male is comparable to the overall workforce. Although 74.5% of the overall workforce is female, a much higher percentage of those females compared to males are working on part-time or term-time only basis.

Applicants for Employment and Promotion

A total of 446 vacancies were advertised during the year 2020/21. The following table indicates the results of the recruitment monitoring for the same period. Please note that more people are appointed to posts than the number of posts advertised. This is due to multiple post holders in the same job e.g. social workers.

Applicants for Employment and Promotion by Protected Characteristic

	Applicants	Shortlisted	Appointed
Female	4275	1345	336
Male	2795	695	141
Minority Ethnic	504	105	17
Disabled	409	123	19

LGB	429	120	25
------------	-----	-----	----

The numbers of people appointed in each category reflect the general makeup of the Council as a whole.

Training

Equality monitoring is normally carried out in respect of attendance at internal training courses only and has been undertaken by the use of equality monitoring forms that now monitor all protected characteristics. Sexual orientation and pregnancy and maternity were added during 2014/15.

Identification of the need for training, learning and development is carried out through the Council's workforce planning and performance review systems. During personal development interviews managers will discuss with employees their training, learning and development needs which are aligned to the performance review and job competencies. The results of these feed in to a departmental or divisional training plan.

The Council does not currently monitor whether training requests are refused as the process used to identify training, does not lend itself to this type of monitoring. This however will be considered.

Due the pandemic the delivery of formal training was reviewed, unfortunately it appears that equality monitoring was not undertaken. This will be reviewed for next year.

Disciplinary & Grievance

Disciplinary and Grievance cases are recorded and monitored through the Vision System. There were a total of 193 cases covering disciplinary, grievance and dignity at work and disciplinary action resulting from sickness absence in 2020/21. The tables below provide equality monitoring information for these cases:

Gender

	Total	Discipline	Discipline related to Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Male	100	62	31	0	7
Female	95	60	21	0	14
Total	195	122	52	0	21

As can be seen from the table above there were more males involved, however when you break this down into percentages, 50.8% of disciplinary cases involved males and 49.2% involved females.

Age

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
16 – 24	15	7	6	0	2
25 – 34	31	20	7	0	4
35 – 44	50	33	11	0	6
45 – 54	50	29	14	0	7
55 – 64	42	29	11	0	2
65+	7	4	3	0	0
Total	195	122	52	0	21

Disability

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Disabled	2	2	0	0	0
Non Disabled	157	99	42	0	16
Information not held	36	21	10	0	5
Total	195	122	52	0	21

Ethnicity

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Asian	1	1	0	0	0
Black	0	0	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0	0	0
Mixed	0	0	0	0	1
White	145	96	37	0	13
Other	1	1	0	0	0
Information not held	46	24	15	0	7
Total	195	122	52	0	21

Religion or Belief

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
No Religion	57	34	20	0	3
Christian	41	28	8	0	5
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to say	10	9	0	0	1
Information not held	87	51	24	0	12
Total	195	122	52	0	21

Sexual Orientation

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Heterosexual	57	35	16	0	6
Gay/Lesbian	4	2	1	0	1
Bisexual	0	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to say	10	8	2	0	0
Information not held	124	77	33	0	14
Total	193	122	52	0	21

Gender Reassignment & Pregnancy and Maternity

There were 2 employees in these categories involved in disciplinary, sickness absence or grievance cases.

Leaving Employment

Information gained from the Vision System shows that a total of 688 employees left the employment of the Council in 2020/21, which included 7 employees who were made redundant. It should be noted that these employees were school based, where the decision on redundancy rests with the relevant school in accordance with School Governance Regulations. The tables below indicate the number of leavers and reasons for leaving during 2020/21

Reasons for Leaving by Gender

Reason for Leaving	Female	Male	Total
Age Retirement	55	16	71
Death in Service	7	5	12
Dismissed	3	4	7
Early Retirement (Teachers)	4	1	5

End of Contract	66	15	81
Failed Probationary Period	2	0	2
Ill Health	9	9	18
Inability to Attend Work	0	2	2
Mutual Agreement	64	13	77
Redundant	7	0	7
Transfer to another Council	19	13	32
Voluntary	254	87	341
Voluntary early retirement and redundancy	18	7	25
Voluntary redundancy	6	2	8
Total	514	174	688

The gender breakdown of those leaving reflects the gender breakdown of the Council as a whole.

Reason for Leaving by Age

Reason for leaving	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Total
Age Retirement	0	0	0	0	26	45	71
Death in Service	0	0	2	3	7	0	12
Dismissed	0	3	1	2	1	0	7
Early retirement (Teachers)	0	0	0	0	5	0	5
End of Contract	12	38	21	7	2	1	81
Failed probationary period	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Ill health	0	0	1	3	11	3	18
Inability to Attend Work	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Mutual agreement	0	3	6	16	29	23	77
Redundant	0	0	2	2	3	0	7
Transfer to another Council	0	6	15	9	2	0	32
Voluntary	41	99	77	69	39	16	341
VER and redundancy	0	0	0	0	20	5	25
Voluntary redundancy	0	1	1	5	1	0	8
Total	53	152	128	116	146	93	688

Reason for Leaving by Disability

Reason for Leaving	Total
Age Retirement	1
Death in Service	1
End of Contract	1

Ill health	2
Inability to Attend Work	1
Mutual agreement	4
Voluntary	3
Total	13

Reason for Leaving by Ethnicity

Reason	White	Ethnic Minority	Not Known	Total
Age retirement	67	0	4	71
Death in service	12	0	0	12
Dismissed	5	0	2	7
Early retirement (Teachers)	4	1	0	5
End of contract	63	2	16	81
Failed probationary period	2	0	0	2
Ill health	18	0	0	18
Inability to Attend Work	2	0	0	2
Mutual agreement	66	1	10	77
Redundant	7	0	0	7
Transfer to another Council	24	0	8	32
Voluntary	253	8	80	341
VER with redundancy	22	0	3	25
Voluntary redundancy	6	0	2	8
Total	551	12	125	688

Reason for Leaving by Religion or Belief

Reason	Buddhist	Christian	Muslim	No Religion	Other	Prefer not to say	Not Known	Total
Age Retirement	0	27	0	11	2	2	29	71
Death in Service	0	5	0	3	0	0	4	12
Dismissed	0	2	0	2	0	1	2	7
Early retirement (teachers)	0	3	0	1	0	0	1	5
End of contract	0	26	1	21	1	4	28	81

Failed probationary period	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Ill health	0	5	0	3	0	1	9	18
Inability to Attend Work	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Mutual agreement	0	20	0	10	0	0	47	77
Redundant	0	2	0	2	0	0	3	7
Transfer to another Council	0	11	0	8	0	2	11	32
Voluntary	2	63	2	126	3	16	129	341
VER with redundancy	0	13	0	2	1	3	6	25
Voluntary redundancy	0	3	0	2	0	0	3	8
Total	2	182	3	193	7	29	272	688

Reason for Leaving by Sexual Orientation

Reason	Hetero-sexual	Gay/Lesbian	Bi-sexual	Prefer not to say	Not Known	Total
Age retirement	36	0	0	1	34	71
Death in service	7	0	0	0	5	12
Dismissed	2	0	0	0	5	7
Early retirement (Teachers)	3	0	0	0	2	5
End of contract	10	1	0	0	70	81
Failed probationary period	1	0	0	0	1	2
Ill health	7	0	0	0	11	18
Inability to Attend Work		1	0	0	1	2
Mutual agreement	21	0	0	1	55	77
Redundant	3		0	0	4	7
Transfer to another Council	12	0	0	0	20	32
Voluntary	129	3	2	12	195	341
VER with redundancy	17	0	0	2	6	25
Voluntary redundancy	3	0	0	0	5	8
Total	251	5	2	16	414	688

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

BITC RACE AT WORK CHARTER

21 MARCH 2022

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN DISCUSSION WITH
THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, CLLR MAUREEN WEBBER, DEPUTY
LEADER**

Author: Hafeez Oluwatobi Koiki, Graduate Diversity and Inclusion Officer

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides information on the Business In Community's (BITC) Race at Work Charter. It is a pledge organisations, including local authorities, can commit to. Signing amplifies the organisation's commitment to equality of opportunity in the workplace. Signing this pledge demonstrates our commitment to race equality and wider organisational inclusivity.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

The Council signs the Race at Work Charter and follows the recommended guidelines for compliance to reduce racial disparities in employment for Black and Minority Ethnic staff.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 We recommend the Council sign the Race At Work Charter to promote a better work environment for our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff by:

- Sharing the business case for diversity;
- Recruiting the best and brightest;
- Attracting and retaining millennials;
- Increasing our customer base;
- Engaging our customer base.

- 3.2 Following the guidelines in the Race At Work Charter will improve the Council's reputation as an inclusive employer to the community and to the Black and Minority ethnic staff that work for us.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Racial inequality has been a long-standing problem in workforces across Wales. This was highlighted in the Welsh Government's Race Equality Action Plan. The Council must begin the process of taking action to correct the disparity. Signing the Race at Work Charter would be a clear indication that the Council recognises racial issues and is taking action.
- 4.2 The Race at Work Charter offers guidelines for compliance that help provide a better working environment for employees and research has shown that organisations with more diverse teams have 36% better financial returns (Source, BITC).
- 4.3 The Race at Work Charter has 7 actions to take when complying with the pledge:
- Appoint an executive sponsor for race.
 - Capture ethnicity data & publicise progress.
 - Commit at board level to zero tolerance of harassment and bullying.
 - Make clear that supporting equality in the workplace is the responsibility of all leaders and managers.
 - Take action that supports ethnic minority career progression.
 - Support race inclusion allies in the workplace.
 - Include Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse-led enterprise owners in supply chains.
- 4.4 The Council has already committed to a number of the above-mentioned points, e.g. the Chief Executive is the executive sponsor for race and the Council has publicly committed to the #ZeroRacismWales pledge.
- 4.5 An action plan will be developed to improve our processes and take action to meet the requirements of the Race at Work Charter.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/ SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

An Equality Impact Screening Assessment has been undertaken and no negative impacts have been identified for this area of work. Signing the Race at Work Charter will bring about positive impacts particularly for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff and residents.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

We will work with the Council's Welsh Language unit in the development of the action plan to support the Race at Work Charter, ensuring we promote opportunities to use the Welsh Language wherever possible.

7. CONSULTATION/ INVOLVEMENT

Engagement with Spotlight the Council's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff network has taken place and they support the Council signing the Race at Work Charter.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

To support our progress towards the Race at Work Charter we are able to subscribe to membership of the BITC. The annual fee of £9,250 will include:

- availability of resources, training and webinars;
- advisory services;
- a diagnostic toolkit to measure progress;
- membership of a Regional Leadership Board.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

This work supports the Public Sector Equality Duty contained within the Equality Act 2010.

10. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

Equality considerations feature throughout Corporate and National priorities and specifically the contents of this report contributes to a More Equal Wales and a Wales of Cohesive Communities.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21 MARCH 2022

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN DISCUSSION WITH
THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, CLLR WEBBER, DEPUTY LEADER**

*

Background papers: None

**Officer to contact: Melanie Warburton, Diversity and Inclusion Manager
Hafeez Koiki, Graduate Diversity and Inclusion
Officer**



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21ST MARCH 2022

EDUCATION & INCLUSION SERVICES PLANNED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR J BONETTO

Author:

Andrea Richards, Service Director of 21st Century Schools and Transformation (01443 744002)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The report provides Members with details of the capital works for approval for 2022/23 as part of the Council's three-year Capital Programme.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approve the Education Capital Programme priority schemes for 2022/23 as outlined in Appendices 1-10 and approve scheme commencement.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

3.1 An ongoing programme of work is required in school premises to deal with essential condition and health and safety issues across the school estate, to ensure school buildings are 'safe, watertight and warm'.

3.2 These works will support schools with effective maintenance that will continue to reduce the risks associated with buildings and building services and help to prevent the need for significant capital expenditure and disruption to children's education which can follow with building failure.

3.3 To continue to deliver the Council's long term school modernisation improvement programme supporting one of the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities: 'Prosperity – Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper'.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Members will be aware that an amount of £8.230M has been allocated to the planned capital programme (minor works) for 2022/23, as agreed by Cabinet on the 28th February 2022.
- 4.2 The continuation of the three-year rolling Capital Programme and sustaining the level of funding will continue to make significant enhancements to the quality of our school premises and has been a vital part of the Council's School Modernisation Programme in order to prepare schools for the new Curriculum for Wales.
- 4.3 Fit for purpose school buildings is important to ensure that the Council can focus on maximising educational outcomes in these challenging times and improve all of our schools by creating 21st Century learning spaces. This includes delivering modern, water tight and warm classrooms, rich with ICT and improved energy efficiency which drives down our CO₂ emission's contributing to the Council's 2030 net zero carbon target.
- 4.4 Improving our school estate also supports schools, and the Council, with delivering the Welsh Government's Community School Initiative, embedding schools at the heart of society, ensuring that our schools are used for the wider benefit of the communities directly served by their schools. This will allow increased access and participation through the provision of good quality facilities enabling enrichment and facilitating extra-curricular activities such as access to halls for music, drama, play, classrooms for learning, spaces for meetings and recreational for sport, which will support our communities to become vibrant, and provide safe meeting and learning environments.
- 4.5 This funding will also ensure that the Council supports the local supply chains and local construction industry, supporting small businesses at the heart of our communities by providing local employment.
- 4.6 In framing options for the planned capital works programme, the following factors have been taken into account:
- The results of the Property Condition Surveys and further investigation works by Council surveyors and engineers.
 - Delivering priorities set out in the Service Asset Management Plan in line with the Corporate Asset Management Plan.
 - ESTYN Inspection Reports.
 - Health and Safety considerations.
 - Reducing energy and carbon.
 - Refurbishing classrooms to provide flexible creative teaching spaces in preparation for the new Curriculum for Wales 2022.
 - Investing in adaptations to schools to assist pupils with mobility and other accessibility needs to promote inclusion.
- 4.7 The programme has been divided into categories identifying the nature of the works considered to be a priority.

5. CATEGORIES WITHIN THE PROGRAMME

5.1 The table below sets out the proposed allocation of the planned capital programme funds now available to spend in 2022/23.

SPEND CATEGORY	£M
Kitchen Refurbishments/Remodelling	0.250
Window & Door Replacements	0.163
Essential Works	0.496
Electrical Rewiring	0.312
Fire Alarm Upgrades	0.150
Toilet Refurbishments	1.170
Equalities Act/Compliance Works	0.225
Education & Inclusion Access Condition Surveys	0.097
Boiler Replacement	0.950
Roof Renewal	2.555
Asbestos Remediation Works	0.900
21 st Century Classroom Upgrade	0.566
Improvements to Schools	0.100
Capitalisation of IT Hardware/Software & Licences	0.296
Total	8.230

5.2 Appendices 1–10 set out programmes of work for each category included above, with the exception of Education & Inclusion Service Access Condition Surveys, Asbestos Remediation Works, Improvements to Schools and Capitalisation of IT Hardware/Software and Licences.

5.3 The following narrative summarises the required investment and intended outcome of each Spend Category:

- **Kitchen Refurbishments/Remodelling**

A rolling programme of replacement kitchens is required to maintain the current capital asset of school buildings and assist with much needed improvements, contributing towards the implementation of the Welsh Government 'Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Wales) 2013'. Appendix 1 provides Members with a list of identified schemes.

- **Window & Door Replacements**

A rolling programme of replacement windows and doors is required to improve the energy efficiency, and in doing so reduce energy costs, and maintain the current capital asset of school buildings. Appendix 2 provides Members with a list of identified schemes.

- **Essential Works**

Members will be aware of the amount and value of outstanding historical maintenance works required to the buildings in the Education and Inclusion Services portfolio. Appendix 3 provides Members with a list of priority works, considered essential to maintain a 'safe, watertight and warm' environment

for all users.

- **Electrical Rewiring**

Appendix 4 provides Members with details of Education establishments that require electrical rewiring.

- **Fire Alarm Upgrades**

Appendix 5 provides Members with details of schools that require fire alarm upgrades from manual to automatic detection systems in order to comply with current legislation.

- **Toilet Refurbishments**

Appendix 6 provides Members with details of schools that require refurbishment to comply with The Education (School) Premises Regulations 1999, the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and to support the recommendations in the report 'Lifting the Lid on the Nation's School Toilets' produced by the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

- **Equalities Act/Compliance Works**

An allocation of funding has been set aside to continue with works as and when deemed necessary to comply with the Equalities Act 2010. Appendix 7 provides Members with a list of identified schemes.

- **Equality and Access Condition Surveys**

Continuation of Phase 2 access condition surveys to all Primary schools to improve accessibility throughout the Education estate in order to comply with the Equality Act 2010.

- **Boiler Replacement**

A significant number of systems are reaching the end of their useful life, therefore, it is considered prudent to fund a rolling programme of replacement to assist with the reduction in energy and carbon emissions. Appendix 8 provides Members with a list of identified schemes.

- **Roof Renewal**

Again it is considered prudent to allocate funding to ensure a rolling programme is maintained. Appendix 9 provides Members with a list of identified schemes.

- **Asbestos Remediation Works**

An allocation of funding has been earmarked to continue essential asbestos remediation works, following the results of recent asbestos surveys commissioned by the Council, and to progress a programme of replacement CLASP buildings affected by asbestos.

- **21st Century Schools Classroom Upgrades**

Upgrading existing classrooms to create 21st Century learning spaces that will assist schools in delivering the new curriculum providing vibrant modern, water tight and warm classrooms, with additional ICT infrastructure. Appendix 10 provides Members with a list of identified schemes.

- **Improvements to Schools**
Under accounting regulations, certain expenditure that was previously charged directly to the revenue budget is now shown in the Capital Programme, whilst still being funded from revenue.
- **Capitalisation of IT Hardware/Software and Licences**
An allocation of funding has been committed for on-going hardware, software and licences to support essential data systems such as SIMS (Schools Information Management System).

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 The proposed schemes have given due consideration to equality issues, particularly in relation to access to our school premises. Schools are a key part of our communities and as such it is important that they are well maintained, accessible and ‘fit for purpose’.
- 6.2 As this report isn’t seeking permission to implement a proposal in respect of a change of function, service, strategy or policy, it is deemed that an EqlA is not required in this instance.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 As this report is not seeking permission to implement a proposal in respect of a change of function, service, strategy or policy, it is deemed that a Welsh Language Impact Assessment is not required in this instance.

8. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1 There are no consultation requirements arising from this report. However, subject to the decision of Cabinet, further collaboration will be undertaken with each school setting to deliver the agreed programme of works in a suitable and mutually agreed time period.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The funding allocation to support spend categories contained within this report was agreed by Cabinet on 28th February 2022 as part of the three-year Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2024/25. This report does not commit any additional spend over and above this agreed allocation.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 The legislation considered in compiling this report is the ‘Keeping Learners Safe’ - the role of local authorities, governing bodies and proprietors of independent schools under the Education Act 2002.

11. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL’S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

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

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

11.2 Due regard has been made to all seven wellbeing goals and the Five Ways of Working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which requires the Council to think about the long-term impact of decisions, on communities to prevent consistent issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

This proposal would contribute to achieving the wellbeing goals by:

- Planning for the 'long term', helping to 'prevent' problems occurring or getting worse in the future and delivering services in 'collaboration' with others.

This proposal would achieve the five ways of working by:

- Improving school environments that can deliver the new Curriculum for Wales.
- Improving sustainability of school buildings in the Council portfolio through a commitment to reducing our carbon emissions.
- Provide first class learning facilities for pupils and the wider community and contribute towards a healthier Wales by providing additional facilities for pupils.
- Contributing towards a prosperous Wales by committing to opportunities for local tradespeople and to use local resources, wherever possible to undertake the works to schools.

12. **CONCLUSION**

12.1 The projects identified in the planned capital programme can be committed and delivered within the financial year and will have an immediate impact on improving the fabric of schools, enhancing the learning environments both internally and externally, providing improved facilities for the schools' and communities that they serve. A coherent plan of expenditure will contribute to improvements in a wide range of physical environments benefiting pupils, staff, young people and members of the public.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21ST MARCH 2022

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & INCLUSION SERVICES IN
DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR J
BONETTO**

Background Papers:

Cabinet 28th February 2022: The Council's Three Year Capital Programme 2022/23 – 2024/25

Officer to contact: Andrea Richards (01443 744002)

APPENDIX 1: Kitchen Refurbishments/Remodelling

Property/School	Project	Estimated Cost (£)
Aberdare Town Church in Wales Primary	Dining centre refurbishment	100,000
Treorchy Comprehensive	Complete refurbishment of kitchen 1 and external cladding	50,000
Various schools	Upgrade serveries	50,000
Various schools	Electric oven installations	50,000
	Total	250,000

APPENDIX 2: Window and Door Replacements

Property/School	Project	Estimated Cost (£)
Mountain Ash Comprehensive	Phase 2 windows and curtain walling	70,000
St John Baptist Church in Wales High School	Phase 2 windows	50,000
Various schools	External doors	43,000
	Total	163,000

APPENDIX 3: Essential Works

Property/School	Project	Estimated Cost (£)
Dolau Primary	Internal adaptations to create a classroom	20,000
Llantrisant Primary	Land drainage	30,000
Penderyn Primary	External works - retaining wall	40,000
Pengeulan Primary	Continuation of external works, repointing and internal modifications	66,000
Maes-Y-Coed Primary	Retaining wall and safeguarding work	30,000
Alternative Curriculum and Music Service Hub (former Pontypridd Library building)	Internal remodelling works	100,000
Treorchy Primary	External redecoration	30,000
Ysgol Llanhari	Remove redundant chimney stack	20,000
Ysgol Nant-Gwyn	Modifications to traffic management arrangements	30,000
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Ynyswen	External redecoration	30,000
St John Baptist Church in Wales High School	Safeguarding works	100,000
	Total	496,000

APPENDIX 4: Electrical Rewiring

Property/School	Project	Estimated Cost (£)
Aberdare Town Church in Wales Primary	Perimeter and emergency lighting	10,000
Blaengwawr Primary	Electrical rewire	25,000
Cwmbach Church in Wales Primary	Block 1 rewire power/lighting plus associated works	40,000
Darrenlas Primary	Electrical rewire - phase 1	40,000
Penderyn Primary	Lightening protection	10,000
Llanhari Primary	Electrical rewire - phase 1	45,000
Trehopcyn Primary	Electrical rewire - phase 1	42,000
Tref-Y-Rhyg Primary	Electrical rewire - phase 2	50,000
Various schools	Internal/external escape lighting	35,000
Ysgol Llanhari	Electrical rewire	15,000
Total		312,000

APPENDIX 5: Fire Alarm Upgrades

Property/School	Project	Estimated Cost (£)
Cwmbach Church in Wales Primary	Fire alarm upgrade (2 blocks)	18,000
Maes-Y-Coed Primary	Fire alarm upgrade (3 blocks)	22,000
Mountain Ash Comprehensive	Fire alarm upgrade main block	45,000
Treorchy Comprehensive	Fire alarm upgrade phase 3 (admin block 3B, main and lesser halls & gymnasium)	50,000
Various Schools	Fire escape lighting	15,000
Total		150,000

APPENDIX 6: Toilet Refurbishments

Property/School	Project	Estimated Cost (£)
Aberdare Park Primary	Refurbishment to foundation phase toilets	30,000
Blaengwawr Primary	Refurbishment to toilets and creation of hygiene room	60,000
Brynnau Primary	Refurbishment works to pupil toilets	50,000
Cefn Primary	Minor refurbishment to junior boys and girls toilets	40,000
Coedpenmaen Primary	Refurbishment to toilets	40,000
Cwmdar Primary	Refurbishment to junior toilets	50,000
Gelli Primary	Refurbishment to infant toilets	25,000
Llanhari Primary	Refurbishment to nursery and infant toilets	50,000
Llwyncrwn Primary	Refurbishment to foundation phase toilets	50,000
Mountain Ash Comprehensive	Upgrade boys and girls toilets on ground floor	50,000
Parc Primary	Refurbishment to foundation phase toilets	25,000
Penrhiwceibr Primary	Refurbishment to junior toilets	40,000
Pontypridd High School	Refurbishment to KS3/4 toilets and changing rooms	170,000
Penrhys Primary	Refurbishment to toilets, including DDA facilities	40,000
Pontygwaith Primary	Refurbishment to boys toilets	20,000
St John Baptist Church in Wales High School	Refurbishment to pupil toilets	40,000
Trehopcyn Primary	Refurbishment to toilets	50,000
Trerobart Primary	Refurbishment to toilets	30,000
Ysgol Garth Olwg	Replace cubicles for floor to ceiling anti-bullying open plan cubicles	60,000
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Bodringallt	Refurbishment to infant and girls toilets	50,000
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Bronllwyn	Refurbishment to foundation phase & KS2 boys and girls toilets	120,000
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Ynyswen	Refurbishment to boys and girls toilets; and nursery toilets	50,000
Ysgol Hen Felin	Refurbishment of toilets and hygiene room 6 th form	30,000
Total		1,170,000

APPENDIX 7: Equality Act/Compliance Works

Property/School	Project	Estimated Cost (£)
Blaengwawr Primary	New DDA compliant toilets for learning support class	30,000
Various schools	Installation of handrails to support access	50,000
Various schools	Upgrading hygiene areas	50,000
Various schools	Ramps for DDA access	50,000
Various schools	Classroom adaptations for learning support classes	45,000
Total		225,000

APPENDIX 8: Boiler Replacement

Property/School	Project	Estimated Cost (£)
Cwmlai Primary	New heating system	40,000
Glenboi Primary	Boiler replacement	100,000
Hafod Primary	New carbon neutral heating system (phased)	150,000
Llwynypia Primary	New carbon neutral heating system (phased)	150,000
Maerdy Primary	Boiler replacement	50,000
Maesgwyn Special School	Boiler replacement	50,000
Maes-Y-Coed Primary	Boiler replacement	80,000
Penyreglyn Primary	Boiler replacement	50,000
Pontygwaith Primary	New fan convectors	40,000
St Michael's Roman Catholic Primary	Boiler replacement	40,000
Trehopcyn Primary	Boiler replacement	50,000
Tylorstown Primary	Boiler replacement	50,000
Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llwyncelyn	Boiler replacement	50,000
Various Schools	Hot water boilers/ventilation	50,000
Total		950,000

APPENDIX 9: Roof Renewal

Property/School	Project	Estimated Cost (£)
Abernant Primary	Roof repairs, new fascias, rain water goods and ceiling tile works	70,000
Caradog Primary	Roof replacement - phase 2	150,000
Cardinal Newman Roman Catholic Comprehensive	Remove chimney stack and renew curtain walling	70,000
Cwmclydach Primary	Replacement dining room roof	100,000
Darren Park Primary	Roof insulation to main teaching block	30,000
Ferndale Comprehensive	Replace roof, to the drama and hall block	200,000
Glenboi Primary	Roof replacement - flat roof to tower block	100,000
Gwauncelyn Primary	Roof replacement - phase 3	100,000
Hafod Primary	Roof replacement - phase 1 & repointing works	150,000
Llwynypia Primary	Roof works and repairs to rainwater goods	100,000
Miskin Primary	Roof replacement - phase 1	75,000
Pengeulan Primary	Roof replacement - phase 1	120,000
	Roof replacement - phase 2	175,000
Penrhiwceibr Primary	Roof replacement - junior block	175,000
Pontygwaith Primary	Roof replacement - infant block and repointing works to junior block	120,000
Ton Pentre Infants	Replacement roof	175,000
Ton Pentre Junior	Replacement rainwater goods	100,000
Tref-y-Rhyg Primary	Roof replacement - phase 1	100,000
Treorchy Comprehensive	Replacement roofs - blocks 1 and 2, curtain walling to block 1	245,000
Ysgol Gynradd Gymunedol Gymraeg Llantrisant	Roof replacement - phase 2	100,000
Various Schools	Repairs to rainwater goods	100,000
	Total	2,555,000

APPENDIX 10: 21st Century Schools Classroom Upgrades

Property/School	Project	Estimated Cost (£)
Caegarw Primary	Classroom refurbishment foundation phase block	30,000
Cwmdar Primary	Internal refurbishment of classrooms	25,000
Ferndale Community School	Traffic management improvements and development of area at front of school & extend current bus turning circle	100,000
Llwynypia Primary	External works to prevent water ingress and internal refurbishment	50,000
Penderyn Primary	External decoration	40,000
Penrhiwceibr Primary	Classroom upgrades	50,000
Penyreglyn Primary	External decoration and render repairs	25,000
Trehopcyn Primary	Classroom upgrades	50,000
Treorchy Comprehensive	Replace cladding to block 6	80,000
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Bodringallt	Classroom upgrades	40,000
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Bronllwyn	Classroom upgrades and external improvements	76,000
	Total	566,000

This page is intentionally left blank



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL TO ENHANCE WELSH MEDIUM LEARNING SUPPORT CLASS PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH SIGNIFICANT ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS

21ST MARCH 2022

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR BONETTO, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION

Author: Ceri Jones, Head of Inclusion Services (Tel: 01443 744008)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Members of the outcome of the recent consultation in respect of the proposal to enhance Welsh medium Learning Support Class (LSC) provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the information contained within the attached Consultation Report, which includes a summary of correspondence received during the consultation exercise, including the full response from Estyn, feedback received from the online survey, and notes of the meetings held.
- 2.2 Agree to progress the proposal to enhance Welsh medium Learning Support Class (LSC) provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) by issuing the appropriate statutory notice to open a Key Stage 3/4 LSC for pupils with significant Additional Learning Needs (ALN) at Ysgol Garth Olwg accommodating 14 pupils.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To progress the proposal in accordance with the process outlined in Welsh Government legislative guidance (the School Organisation Code 011/2008) so that an improved continuum of Welsh medium Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision can be achieved in RCT.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Members will recall that, at the meeting of Cabinet held on 13th December 2021, approval was given to begin a process of formal consultation on a proposal to enhance Welsh medium Learning Support Class (LSC) provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Consultation Report, prepared in respect of this proposal, is attached at Appendix 1 for your attention. It contains information in respect of meetings held to discuss the proposal, with copies of the notes taken at these meetings; it contains Estyn's full response to the proposal and the appropriate clarification to the response; it also contains a summary of the online survey responses received during the consultation period and where required the appropriate clarification to any issues raised.
- 5.2 It must be noted that there has been a positive response to this particular consultation process with 31 written responses being received via the online survey which was available on the RCT website for the duration of the consultation period and 1 formal letter. Due to COVID restrictions, meetings with the community could not be held. However, a virtual meeting was held with the staff and governors and a face-to-face consultation was undertaken with the School Council.
- 5.3 Out of the 32 responses received, 28 were in agreement with the proposal, 2 respondents were not in agreement and 2 were unsure. The responses were overwhelmingly positive and in favour of the proposal to establish a Welsh medium Learning Support Class at Ysgol Garth Olwg to support pupils with significant additional learning needs.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 Equality and Community Impact Assessments were prepared in respect of this proposal and were published, and can still be viewed, on the Council's website together with the Consultation Document that outlines the proposal in detail. The link is below:
<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/GetInvolved/Consultations/SchoolConsultations/SchoolsConsultations.aspx>
- 6.2 In summary, the outcome of Equality Impact Assessment identified positive and neutral impacts, and no negative impacts, upon the protected characteristics and so it was deemed that approval would be sought to continue to implement the proposal. It also confirmed that the Action Plan will continue to be reviewed throughout the duration of the project delivery period.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment was prepared in respect of this proposal and published, and can still be viewed, on the Council's website together with the Consultation Document that outlines the proposal in detail.

The link is below:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/GetInvolved/Consultations/SchoolConsultations/SchoolsConsultations.aspx>

- 7.2 In summary, the outcome of the Welsh Language Impact Assessment was that the proposal would encourage people to use Welsh at work; it would promote Welsh medium ALN education; increase opportunities for pupils with significant ALN to study through the medium of Welsh; it would promote the status of Welsh or positive attitudes towards the language. No negative impacts were identified.

8. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1 The consultation process in respect of this proposal has been undertaken under the arrangements outlined in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, which was introduced on 1st November 2018, replacing the previous Code introduced in October 2013. These arrangements stipulate that a Consultation Report must be prepared prior to the publication of any Statutory Notices which will progress the proposal. It further states that Statutory Notices must be published within 26 weeks of the end of the consultation period, which is 22nd August 2022 in this instance.

9. THE STATUTORY PROCESS

- 9.1 The Statutory Notice for this proposal will refer to:
- The opening of a Learning Support Class for pupils with significant additional learning needs at Ysgol Garth Olwg with effect from 1st September 2022
- 9.2 If agreed, and subject to the matter not being called in for consideration by Scrutiny, the Statutory Notice will be published on 4th April 2022 and will allow for a minimum 28 day period for objections, ending on 11th May 2022.
- 9.3 If any objections are received during this period, in accordance with the aforementioned Code, an Objections Report will be prepared. This matter will then be reported to a future meeting of Cabinet, in June or July of this year, for Members to receive and consider the Objections Report and to make a final decision on this proposal.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Secondary schools hosting LSC provisions are funded via the Council for one specialist teacher and two learning support assistants at an approximate cost of £112k per class. Funding that is currently provided to Ysgol Garth Olwg to

establish a Step 4 provision following the amended proposal in June 2020 will be re-directed to support the establishment of the proposed new LSC for learners with significant ALN.

- 10.2 The creation of the LSC will incur a transportation cost in line with the Council's Learner Travel Policy, however this increase in cost is seen as a necessity in order to enhance provision for RCT's most vulnerable pupils. Costs cannot be quantified at this time as placements are pupil led.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 11.1 Section 316A of the Education Act 1996 specifies that children with SEN/ALN should normally be educated in mainstream schools if this is compatible with them receiving the special educational/additional learning provision that their learning difficulty requires, the efficient education of other children, and the efficient use of resources.

- 11.2 Section 315 of the Education Act 1996 also requires Local Authorities to ensure that SEN/ALN provision is kept under review. The ALN Code for Wales (2021) places a statutory duty upon the LA to keep under review the overall Additional Learning Provision (ALP) available in its area and supporting arrangements, to ensure provision is sufficient to meet the overall needs of its population of learners with ALN and that provision is available in Welsh.

12. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 12.1 The proposal will ensure that two of the Council's three key priorities will be met. These include:
- Economy: Building a strong economy
 - People: Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone.

- 12.2 The proposal will ensure that some of the Council's most vulnerable pupils will have the best chance of achieving positive outcomes, whilst also ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families in line with strategic priority 3 (Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families) of the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate's Strategic Plan for 2022-2025. The proposal will also ensure more efficient and effective use of the Council resources to promote the development of social inclusion and positive outcomes for learners.

- 12.3 The proposal will ensure there is renewed capacity to focus on prevention which is a key statutory requirement of the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act and a key element of the Council's Corporate Plan.

12.4 The proposal will also assist the Directorate in meeting the targets of the Council's current Welsh in Education Strategic Plan for this academic year, and beyond.

13. CONCLUSION

13.1 Members are asked to consider the contents of the attached Consultation Report, and to give officers approval to publish an appropriate Statutory Notice to progress this proposal.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21ST MARCH 2022

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN
DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR
BONETTO CABINET, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION**

Background papers: None

Officer to contact: Ceri Jones, Head of Inclusion Services (01443 744008)



**PROPOSAL TO ENHANCE WELSH
MEDIUM LEARNING SUPPORT CLASS
PROVISION WITHIN RCT**

CONSULTATION REPORT

February 2022

CONSULTATION REPORT

Proposal: to enhance Welsh medium Learning Support Class provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf

1. Purpose of the Consultation Report

This report is prepared in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code. Its purpose is to inform the outcome of the consultation held during the period 10th January 2022 and 21st February 2022 between all stakeholders and interested parties listed below.

2. Who did we consult?

A copy of a consultation document which fully outlined and explained our proposal was sent to the following stakeholders. The document was also published on the Council website at www.rctcbc.gov.uk/schoolconsultations.

- The Governing Bodies, parents, carers and staff of Ysgol Garth Olwg
- Governing Bodies, parents/carers of pupils attending primary schools within the catchment area of the proposed host secondary schools
- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authorities
- The Governing Body of Coleg Y Cymoedd
- The Governing Body of the University of South Wales
- Welsh Minister for Education and Skills
- Assembly Members for all constituencies and regional areas serving Rhondda Cynon Taf
- The Early Years and Childcare Partnership
- South East Wales Transport Association
- The local Communities First Partnerships
- Teaching and Support staff trade unions
- Central South Consortium Joint Education Service
- Cwm Taf Local Health Board
- Estyn
- Members of Parliament for the Rhondda, Pontypridd and Cynon Valley
- South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner
- The Welsh Language Commissioner
- Neighbouring local authorities
- SNAP Cymru
- Menter Iaith

3. What did we consult on?

The proposal consulted on the enhancement of Welsh medium Learning Support Class provision for Key Stage 3/4 pupils with Significant Additional Learning Needs in September 2022.

Details of the proposal and the rationale behind it are fully outlined in the consultation document that was circulated to all stakeholders listed in point 2 overleaf.

4. The Consultation Process

All stakeholders identified in section 2 were sent electronic copies of our consultation documentation. The consultation documentation was also posted on the RCT Consultation web page with a link to an electronic consultation return. The following meetings were also convened:

School Affected	Group	Time	Date	Venue
Ysgol Garth Olwg	Governing Body and staff	3:30pm - 4:30pm	27 th January 2022	Virtual
Ysgol Garth Olwg	School Council	9:30am - 10:30am	27 th January 2022	Ysgol Garth Olwg

Due to Covid-19 restrictions the meeting with the Governing Body and staff at Ysgol Garth Olwg was held virtually via Teams.

Notes of the above meetings were taken and are attached as Appendix 1a and 1b. These notes record questions raised, comments and statements made, with the responses provided where appropriate.

5. Summary of responses to consultation

Responses to the matters raised at the meetings outlined above are, as indicated, summarised in the notes of the meetings attached as Appendix 1a and 1b. In addition, 31 responses were received via the online survey which was available for the duration of the consultation phase. Out of the 31 on-line submissions 27 (87.1%) were in favour of the proposals, 2 (6.45%) were against, and 2 (6.45%) were unsure. Additionally, 1 formal letter was also received which was in favour of the proposal. When considering all 32 responses, the percentage in favour equates to 87.5%. Please refer to Appendix 2 for details of the proforma responses received.

In accordance with the Code, a summary of the responses received are detailed in the table below and where issues have been raised, these have been responded to, where applicable, by means of clarification with supporting reasons.

The table below highlights the overwhelmingly positive response received to the proposal as consulted upon.

Table 1: Summary of Responses to Online Questionnaire and Formal Responses

Number of consultation responses - 32			
School	Agreed with proposal	Disagreed with proposal	Unsure regarding proposal
Ysgol Garth Olwg	28	2	2

It is pleasing to note that the proposal is seen by stakeholders as a positive enhancement to LSC provision within RCT.

6. Summary of Key Issues Raised and LA Responses

The following key themes emerged from the consultation:

Table 2: Key Themes

Question	Comments/Issues	Clarification if required
Q1. Do you agree with the proposal?	This is very much needed. However, we should not forget that there are many Primary aged pupils also in need of this provision through the medium of Welsh	It is evident from the responses that the enhancement of Welsh medium provision is welcomed. The LA understands the concern regarding the current lack of primary phase Welsh medium LSC. In the meantime, the primary phase will continue to access the specialist Welsh medium peripatetic provision currently in place. The ALNET Act 2018 requires the LA to develop a bi-lingual system ALN and Access and Inclusion are working towards this requirement.
	There is no current base or support in RCT for Welsh medium education and the new ALNET Act means the authority needs to act and provide where possible. Will increase specialist teachers in the school. Teaches mainstream children about celebrating difference.	This proposal will address this need.
Q2. Please state any alternative options, additional views or	The siting of the support in Garth Olwg is a positive proposal, building on the existing support provision and making the most of	The proposed host school was selected due to their inclusive practices, capacity of surplus places, geographical location.

Question	Comments/Issues	Clarification if required
<p>points which you would like to be taken into account.</p>	<p>its central role in the community and new 3-19 status.</p>	
	<p>Why does it have to be within a mainstream school? Surely a stand-alone unit would be more beneficial to all.</p>	<p>RCT has 44 LSCs within the borough all of which are located within mainstream schools. Having the specialist provision based at mainstream settings is key to the ethos of an inclusive education. Pupils will have bespoke learning plans which include inclusion in mainstream lessons/activities as appropriate to their individual needs.</p>
	<p>1. Ble mae'r ddarpariaeth ar gyfer plant oed cynradd? 2. Beth yn benodol fydd anawsterau'r plant? O brofiad, mae anghenion yn amrywio'n fawr felly pa anghenion y bydd y dosbarth cynnal dysgu'n canolbwyntio arnynt? 3. Os oes 44 dosbarth cynnal dysgu trwy gyfrwng y Saesneg yn ogystal ag ysgolion arbennig ac unedau, sut gellir cyfiawnhau dim ond lle ar gyfer 14 disgybl mewn 1 dosbarth a dim byd o gwbl ar gyfer plant cynradd?</p> <p>1. Where is the provision for primary age children? 2. What specifically will be the children's difficulties? From experience, needs vary greatly so what needs will the learning support class focus on them? 3. If there are 44 teaching support classes through the medium of English as well as special schools and units, how only space for 14 pupils in 1 class can be justified and nothing at all for primary children?</p>	<p>Concern is noted. The LA is required by Welsh Government and the ALNET Act 2018 to continuously review both the sufficiency of its Additional Learning Provision for both English and Welsh medium learners and work proactively towards developing a fully bilingual ALN system over time.</p> <p>The proposed LSC will support pupils with significant additional learning needs. There will be agreed Placement Criteria which will be written in consultation with the school. It is recognised that the LSC may need more than 1 classroom area for interventions to help support each learner and sufficient support and expertise to support pupils with a range of needs. The needs of the pupils attending the provision will be closely monitored by the LA in collaboration with the school.</p>
<p>Q3. Under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, the Council has a legal</p>	<p>laith o ddewis, rhaid rhoi dewis i pawb. Anabledd - gall plant gyda anabledd dysgu colli mas ar opportunities, os nad oes cyfle iddyn nhw dysgu trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg. Bydd hyn yn ffafrio i lefel cydraddolbed o ran iaith</p>	<p>The proposal seeks to address in part the inequality of specialist provision available through the medium of Welsh. Further work will be undertaken by Access & Inclusion to ensure all pupils who meet the entry criteria for</p>

Question	Comments/Issues	Clarification if required
<p>duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. How would the Council's proposal affect you because of your:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Sex b. Age c. Ethnicity d. Disability e. Sexuality f. Religion/Belief g. Gender identity h. Relationship status i. Pregnancy j. Preferred language. 	<p>dewisol. Ar hyn o bryd mae hyn yn anghytwys. Language of choice, everyone must be given a choice. Disability - children with a learning disability can miss out on opportunities, if there is no opportunity for them to learn through the medium of Welsh This will favour an equalised level of preferred language. At the moment this is unbalanced.</p>	<p>specialist placement in a LSC have access to Welsh medium specialist learning support class. However, as noted above, all primary aged pupils will continue to receive support from our Welsh medium peripatetic team at this point in time. This will be reviewed by Access and Inclusion in line with the statutory duty upon LAs under the ALNET Act to review the sufficiency of their Additional Learning Provision to meet the needs of their learners.</p>
	<p>2. Oed - mae'r ddarpariaeth dim ond ar gyfer plant oed uwchradd 10. Iaith - er bod y ddarpariaeth yn y Gymraeg, mae angen cydraddoldeb ar blant yr ardal er mwyn cael mynediad i addysg arbenigol o 3-11 oed hefyd.</p> <p>Age – provision is only for secondary age children 10. Language - although provision is in Welsh, the children of the area need equality in order to access specialist education from aged 3-11.</p>	<p>As above.</p>
<p>Q4. Do you think the proposal could (positively) impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language?</p>	<p>The opportunity here is to considerably improve Welsh language provision not only for learners with ALN but support those who also come from non-Welsh-speaking homes who perhaps have had limited support over the difficulties of the pandemic.</p>	<p>Schools have received grant funding to address the adverse impact of the pandemic on learner outcomes.</p>
	<p>Due to there being no ALN classes currently through the medium of Welsh this has resulted in a failing for many children. At the end of the day we live in Wales why are there no Welsh medium ALN classes?</p>	<p>The LA recognises that there is a need to enhance Welsh medium specialist provision for pupils with additional learning needs and this proposal will provided enhanced provision in the Welsh medium sector. Further work will be undertaken regarding the</p>

Question	Comments/Issues	Clarification if required
		development of bi-lingual specialist provision in future.
Q5. Do you think the proposal in any way treats the Welsh Language LESS favourably than the English Language?	This will have a negative impact on the use of the Welsh language within the school	There will be a requirement for all pupils who are eligible for placement in the LSC to speak Welsh and to access their education through this medium. There is no evidence to suggest that this provision will adversely impact on the use of Welsh language in the school.

7. Estyn's Response

Please refer to Appendix 3 which details Estyn's responses to the proposal from Rhondda Cynon Taf to enhance learning support classes with effect from September 2022. In line with School Organisation Code, it is to be presented in full.

LA Response to Estyn Feedback on Proposals

RCT acknowledges the response from Estyn and is pleased to note that it has agreed that there will be no detrimental impact on education standards if the proposal to enhance LSC provision within the County Borough is implemented. Estyn response also acknowledges that the proposal provides a further option for educating a small number of pupils with significant additional learning needs through the medium of Welsh which is does not currently available within RCT.

RCT is pleased that the proposal is in accordance with the requirements set out in the Additional Learning Needs Education Tribunal (ALNET) Act 2018 for a continuum of provision for pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), and which also provides bilingual support.

The table below responds in more detail to the main comments raised by Estyn:

Table 3: Estyn Feedback

Comments within Estyn Feedback	RCT Response
Pupils who are likely to use the new LSC must currently be taught either in mainstream Welsh medium classes or in English medium LSCs elsewhere.	Yes, this comment is correct Welsh medium ALN pupils are currently supported via a specialist peripatetic team within their mainstream setting.
Three reasons are given why Ysgol Garth Olwg has been selected for the new LSC: its inclusive practice, its success in educating pupils with additional learning needs and its	ALN provision has historically been effective as referenced by previous Estyn inspection reports. The school continues to work effectively with a range of ALN

Comments within Estyn Feedback	RCT Response
<p>current surplus capacity. However, no evidence is given to support the first two assertions</p>	<p>Services in relation to providing inclusive additional learning provision to their learners with ALN.</p>
<p>There is no comment in the proposal about the possibility of more parents wanting to educate their children through the medium of Welsh and whether this might impact on the current and future surplus capacity at Ysgol Garth Olwg.</p>	<p>The LA is required to continuously review its specialist provision. The ALNET Act requires the LA to ensure we provide a bilingual provision to RCT learners. Therefore, we will be closely monitoring the use of the LSC. In addition, expanding Welsh medium educational provision for learners is a priority within the LA WESP.</p>
<p>There are two risks associated with the proposal which aren't considered. Firstly, having a single Welsh medium LSC in the whole of RCT is likely to mean that some pupils attending the new LSC would have to travel significant distances every school day. It is possible that some parents might refuse to allow their children to attend the new LSC if they live too far away from it.</p> <p>Secondly, the employment benefit of having one teacher and two teaching assistants to run the new LSC is mentioned, but not the impact of this on the current peripatetic Welsh medium additional learning needs support being provided in the local authority.</p>	<p>It is acknowledged that some pupils may have further to travel however the situation will be closely monitored. Further work will be undertaken regarding the development of bi-lingual specialist provision throughout RCT in future. Transport will be provided in accordance with LA's generous home to school transport policy.</p> <p>The specialist peripatetic team will continue to support ALN Welsh medium pupils within primary settings.</p>
<p>An estimated cost must be available and could have been included and explained within the proposal.</p>	<p>Secondary schools hosting LSC provisions are funded via the Council for one specialist teacher and two Learning Support Assistants at an approximate cost of £112k per class. Additional funding to enhance RCT LSC provision was approved during a previous proposal to Cabinet. Due to the impact of Covid this consultation was paused, and funding redirected for a time limited 2 year period to enable Ysgol Garth Olwg to establish a school based Step 4 provision.</p>
<p>The proposal could have referred to previous inspection reports for the original secondary and primary schools on the site in providing evidence for why Ysgol Garth Olwg is an appropriate school to host the new LSC.</p>	<p>Comment is noted.</p>

Comments within Estyn Feedback	RCT Response
What extent the host school supports the proposal.	The Governing Body, pupils, parents/carers and staff have all been consulted on the proposal the responses received have been extremely positive.

8. Assessment of Consultation

In view of the responses and comments received during the consultation period, a further assessment of the proposals, which are included within the consultation document, has been undertaken. The proposals have been revisited and the following matters have been reassessed:

- The likely impact of the proposals on the quality and standards of education;
- The likely impact on the community; and
- The likely effect of differing travelling arrangements.

After further consideration, the proposals are considered to remain appropriate and as such no amendments to the proposal have been made.

9. Conclusion

Following consideration of the information held within this report no information submitted during the consultation period is considered to warrant a change to the consultation document and so the information remains unchanged. As such it is considered that these proposals should be progressed in accordance with the School Organisation Code with no amendments.

Implementing this plan will be of benefit Welsh medium pupils with significant ALN across RCT and will ensure greater equality and access to specialist provision.

The priority for the Education and Inclusion Service Directorate is to continue to focus on driving up standards in schools and to improve the outcomes for all children and young people. In light of the Welsh Government ALN Transformation Agenda and the Council's vision to increase the number of Welsh medium learners in its schools by responding proactively to both national and local strategies, such as the Welsh Government Welsh Language Strategy: Cymraeg 2050, Rhondda Cynon Taf's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and the current 21st Century Schools plan to increase and improve Welsh medium provision RCT, it is essential to enhance current Welsh medium ALN provision within RCT.

The recommendation of this report is that the publishing of a statutory notice should be considered by Cabinet, and consulted upon with no modifications, in order to progress with the proposal outlined.



Learning Support Class Review Consultation Event 2022			
School Name:	Ysgol Garth Olwg		
Venue:	Virtual meeting via Teams		
Date:	27.01.20	Local Authority Officers in Attendance:	Ceri Jones Lisa Carter
Number of attendees:	41 (37 staff, 2 Governors and 2 LA officers)		
Governors and Staff			
<p>Mr Edwards explained to the attendees that a meeting had been held with the School Council this morning and pupils engaged well with the discussions and that this session was part of the wider consultation process.</p> <p>Mr Edwards introduced the LA officers.</p> <p>Ceri Jones reminded attendees that the consultation on proposals were started 2 years ago prior to the pandemic however they were suspended, and a Step 4 provision established within the school. The LA now wishes to open a Learning support Class provision for 14 pupils with significant additional learning needs. Ceri Jones provided attendees an overview of proposals using the script, explaining current provisions and the new ALNET statutory duties highlighting that the LA now has to work proactively to provide Welsh medium provision. Welsh medium support does exist within Access and Inclusion with specialist teachers, EPs and this will continue but needs to be enhanced. This is seen as an exciting opportunity for both school and LA who aim to increase Welsh medium specialist provision across the LA.</p> <p>Dosbarth yr Bont was established as a school-based provision (Step 4). The difference with the proposal is that the LSC will be managed by the Access & Inclusion Service but is very much a partnership with the school. For example, the School Council will help with the appointment process. The LSC will be accessed by all pupils across the County Borough however there will be entry/exit criteria. The questions raised by the attendees are summarised below</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are Garth Olwg Governors not involved in appointment process? LA has no objection to governors being part of the appointment process, governors are welcome to join the process. Chair of Governors would like GB to be included. • Concerns were raised that there remains no Welsh medium provision for the younger children as school is 3-19 why is the proposal only for KS3/4 pupils? 			

LA continuously reviews its LSC provision and we are considering younger LSC provision as it is recognised that early intervention and preventative approaches are key. In the meantime the LA will continue with its peripatetic support for primary pupils

- **Concerns were raised that 2 pupils with very different ALN would be placed together?**

LA appreciates the concern as there is only one LSC proposed at the moment this will be the case. However, if the proposal proceeds the LA will work in collaboration with other Welsh medium specialist provisions who currently support pupils with a range of ALN, reviewing their models of delivery. The LA and school will continuously review the situation as the LSC is embedded. Within our special schools we have a wide range of needs being supported. Class organisation and support from staff will be key to success, including timetabling to allow pupils to access mainstream provision. The skill set of staff will be an important factor to ensuring the LSC can support a range of needs.

- **If a pupil accesses the LSC from another RCT secondary school, do they go back to their original school for the mainstream integration element?**

No the pupils will be based full time at Ysgol Garth Olwg so they would become part of the school community

- **Dosbarth Y Bont is match funded by the LA. What happens if the current pupils accessing that provision do not meet the criteria for the new LSC?**

When submitting a proposal for the Step 4 funding, a key criterion for accessing the match funding was that the school would sustain the model at the end of the funding period. School would have to continue to support those pupils who do not meet LSC criteria.

LA matched funding for Dosbarth y Bont is time limited therefore the responsibility to sustain the provision lies with the school. The school could do the same as another Tranche 1 school and continue with the Step 4 provision utilising their own budget.

- **Would LA consider a phased approach to allow school to continue to support Dosbarth y Bont? If LSC is not at capacity could Dosbarth y Bont pupil access the LSC?**

Further discussions would be needed between school and LA. Yes, pupils could potentially access the provision if the class was not full however those pupils that meet criteria would be prioritised over Y Bont pupils

- **Would school staff have additional training in order to support ALN pupils?**

Schools that host LSC always provide overwhelming feedback regarding the positive and often significant collaboration between ALNCo and LSC staff. Access and Inclusion will ensure that training will be available to support staff – professional learning programme.

- **Do you have any concerns regarding the recruitment of staff for the LSC?**

It will be a challenge. We have at times experienced difficulty appointing English medium specialist posts; however, the posts will be advertised externally and in the Times Education Supplement.

- **What happens if staff are unavailable to support the LSC?**

Supply cover from day 1 is paid for by the LA also Access and Inclusion have specialists who can support the class. Each class has a dedicated SEN Co-ordinator who will provide

strategic support. We understand there could be issues, but we will do our best to put in enhanced support

- **Concerned with the number of staff to pupil ratio to ensure needs of pupils are met**
Diversity of need in the LSC may require additional support and this will be closely monitored. Access and Inclusion have the facility to provide enhanced support to LSCs on a short-term basis. Applications are considered by ALN Panel and reviewed on a termly basis. A long term situation would be reviewed to ensure staffing was sufficient

- **Concerned with pupil attainment and impact on other learners when ALN pupils accesses mainstream settings?**

No historical concerns have been raised by other host schools. Integration with mainstream is part of the inclusive ethos of the school. LSC teacher will be able to support with the learning of the pupil. Headteacher will be seeking views of other heads regarding the challenges they have faced in preparation for the opening in terms of what has worked. Senior Management will learn from this and develop school practices.



Learning Support Class Consultation Event 2022			
School Name:	Ysgol Garth Olwg		
Venue:	Ysgol Garth Olwg - School canteen		
Date:	27/01/2022	Number of School staff:	2
Number of pupils:	31		
Local Authority Officers in attendance:	Ceri Jones Lisa Carter		
School Council			
<p>The School Council consisted of a number of pupils from year 7-13 who represented a cross section of pupils attending the 3-19 setting.</p> <p>Ceri Jones provided the background of the proposal and explained the rationale as to why the LA was seeking to establish a specialist learning support class provision for pupils in years 7-11 with significant learning needs with effect from 1st September 2022 at Ysgol Garth Olwg.</p> <p>Mr Edwards provided context of the proposal from a school perspective and explained the reason why the school was supporting the proposed LSC provision being located at the school. The Council were encouraged to ask any questions. A summary of the questions raised and responses are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What type of ALN will be supported in the class? The class will support pupils with significant additional learning needs (ALN) – so a mix of ALN. As this will be first Welsh medium Learning Support Class (LSC) provision for pupils with ALN in RCT we will be looking at other models to seek the help and expertise of existing Welsh medium provision in neighbouring LAs. We understand that mixing pupils with for example ASD and behaviour difficulties will be a challenge but we will learn from other provisions, review and refine provision as it becomes more established. • Where will the class be located in the building? Capacity of class will be 14 pupils plus 3 staff members. The LA will work with the school to look at an appropriate location within the school building. It is important that the class is not on the edge of school as we would want to develop an inclusive approach ensuring that the LSC feels a part of the school ethos and in the spirit of inclusion so that pupils won't feel 			

excluded. If the class needs adaptations the LA will work with the school and pay for any adaptations that may be needed.

Mr Edwards added it won't be a class building at the bottom of the field - it will be included within the one community of the school.

- **Will the pupils on roll be in a different registration class?**

They would have their own class registration practice however it does vary from school to school but it is likely they will start in their own class to start the day and check in with the staff. Practice can be reviewed in conjunction with the school as the LSC is established.

Mr Edwards explained that the school has over 1250 pupils and that unfortunately not everyone comes into school ok; some are upset and angry, some may feel they can't work well that particular today. For the first half hour of the day some pupils may need support from members of staff. School will ensure support is at hand to settle them and help them to get into school mode. Could be an element of both some days in LSC some days integrated in mainstream, but it is very much individual needs lead - flexibility and working out what supports the individuals best will be key.

- **Are the pupils within their own year group or will they be mixed across year groups?**

Yes, there will be a mixed age range from years 7-11. The numbers of pupils in the class will vary depending on their needs and what mainstream classes they are accessing. When they access mainstream classes, they will be in their year group.

- **Provision is aimed at years 7-11. Can that be expanded to year 12-13 and possibly younger age range?**

New legislation - ALNET Act has a requirement that the LA endeavours to provide bi-lingual provision for ALN pupils aged 0-25 - the LA now has statutory duty to support a wider range of provision. LA has to continuously review its ALN provision and ensure it is able to support a bi-lingual system. The LA may need to consider expanding provision. At the moment our English medium only supports to yr 11, but the new Act does require us to review that arrangement. Looking at evidence-based research, LSCs may not be best option under the new Act and we are required to look at other opportunities in FE.

Mr Edwards – you are our pupils and the school will support you and signpost you. Support will be available for pupils to remain in school if appropriate it would depend on the learning pathway chosen by the pupil

Ceri Jones explained that we have had pupils within LSCs that have remained in school in the sixth form and the LA and host schools have taken a flexible approach to meeting pupils needs.

- **Will this help the school/help other pupils attending our school?**

Mr Edwards responded, yes absolutely, it will provide opportunities for incidental conversations, sharing good practice at staff learning days, expertise is shared within the wider school context.

Ceri Jones advised the group that within the 44 LSCs the LA support, the overwhelming feedback is positive the impact on ethos of school, network of support, training that can be

shared. The ALNCo within school often works closely with the LSC teacher and shares information with other school colleagues. There are clear benefits.

- **If there was a maths lesson in lesson 2 would it be the same in LSC?**

It could be that the pupils are accessing the same class or they could be undertaking intervention work numeracy/literacy tailored to the needs of the pupils. The lessons may not necessary be held at same time but the LSC will link with maths department to ensure differentiated work, different timetable. Pupils in the LSC will have access to core subjects.

Mr Edwards expressed that one of the benefits of Covid has been the use of digital communication which could continue to support the pupils on-going forward.

- **Will break time and lunch time be the same for the pupils?**

Mr Edwards explained that at the moment there is a split lunch break for lower, middle and upper. It would depend on the individual if they can access the same break then yes but we would be flexible and take a sensible approach, possibly trying different methods to see what works well.

Ceri Jones replied where it is possible for groups to join and we would give this opportunity as sharing experiences with peers would be positive. However, some pupils cannot cope with larger groups. It would be very much based on the individual, but where possible yes it would encouraged.

- **If pupils come from us from a different school would they have to be in a different bubbles?**

Mr Edward stated he would hope that the need for bubbles for everyone would be gone shortly. Once they become part of the school they would be wearing our school uniform so would be in the school community.

Ceri Jones further explained that the placement would not be a part-time placement - pupils would be attending full time, Monday to Friday.

- **What would be the transport arrangements?**

Ceri Jones explained that transport is provided in line with the Council's policy. Pupils would have a taxi into the provision from their home to school; if they were local and within walking distance they would be expected to walk.

- **Have the school got plans to support current pupils to adjust to the new class and help the new pupils?**

Mr Edwards stated that it will be the school's privilege to have this class, it won't be a mystery, school will be honest and open with pupils. Pupils have previously spoken to groups of pupils to tell them about their additional learning needs. If older pupils can provide mentoring and support the head teacher would very much support and appreciate it.

Ceri Jones explained that other schools with LSCs put them on their website and the provision is seen as part of the whole school. There would be peer mentoring opportunities and range of ways you could support – wellbeing mentoring. Bryncelynnog LSC was shared as an example; this setting provides information days, which improves and enhances everyone's understanding and the more you are able to learn the more you can support the pupils. There is a consultation event for staff and governors later today and an

online consultation LA wants it to feel the proposal is being done in collaboration. If there are concerns the LA will endeavour to address them to ensure there is a whole school and community approach to supporting the pupils.

Mr Edwards reiterated that inclusivity and working together is one of the school's core values.

- **Would the pupils be able to join the rugby and football teams?**

Yes of course they would be part of school community.

- **Why only 14 pupils?**

Capacity of class would be 14 pupils with 3 members of staff. However, depending on the mix of pupils, we could place additional pupils and we often put in additional support if this is necessary. If we cannot support any additional pupils because of the existing mix of pupils we may put additional provision in place at their mainstream school.

- **Family member has sister with significant medical and learning needs would she be able to attend the LSC?**

LA has continuum of provision - we have short term placements, LSCs and special schools which supports a range of pupils. This class would not support significant medical/physical needs.

Mr Edwards gave an example of a pupil suffering with acute behavioural needs who would be unable to be supported in an LSC but could access other specialist provision.

Ceri Jones assured the group that there would be comprehensive discussions with staff, pupils and family to ensure the correct placement is provided. The LA is able to move pupils up and down the continuum of provision depending on their needs

Mr Edwards explained that there was a network with Maesgwyn and that the school currently taps into their expertise. For example, their staff have provided training on trauma informed approaches on an inset day.

- **In what way would you be supporting the families?**

There would be a lot of support and involvement from LA staff and teams for meetings, specialist support and advice and information about the pupil's needs and also emotional support. Every parent copes differently. The LA has a Family Liaison Officer and Educational Psychologists who will work with families. If parents make the decision to remain in mainstream then we will support that decision. Once pupil is placed in LSC there is regular contact with parents.

Summary of Returned On-Line Consultation Proformas

This report was generated on 14/02/22. Overall, 31 respondents completed this questionnaire. The report has been filtered to show the responses for 'All Respondents'. The following charts are restricted to the top 12 codes. Lists are restricted to the most recent 100 rows.

Do you agree with the proposal?

Yes	(27)	87.1%
No	(2)	6.45%
Not sure	(2)	6.45%

Please let us know the reasons for your choice:

Most definitely needed to support WM pupils.

This is very much needed. However, we should not forget that there are many Primary aged pupils also in need of this provision through the medium of Welsh.

Especially in the wake of the disruption caused by the pandemic, additional support for Welsh medium pupils with ALN is to be welcomed.

As a parent of a child requiring support this is very good as there needs to be more classes like this out there.

Even in Welsh schools there is a special needs provision needed!

My son attended Garth Olwg mainstream from 11-16 and struggled but would have benefited from an ALN class.

I think both my children would benefit greatly from this idea, my eldest is currently struggling with some aspects of the Welsh language, and it has had a knock on affect in her other subjects.

I believe more support should be given for children with ALN within the Welsh schools.

Mae angen yn y clwstwr am ddsbarth cynnal dysgu. - There is a need in the cluster for a learning support class.

Angen cefnogaeth teg ar gyfer ADY trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg Rydw i yn athrawes mewn Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg ac yn gweld nifer o blant ADY yn symud i addysg Saesneg er mwyn cael y gefnogaeth cyn symud i'r Uwchradd Saesneg. Mae nifer o ddisgyblion ADY gyda ni a fyddai'n elwa o hyn wrth symud i Ysgol Garth Olwg ym mlwyddyn .- Fair support needed for ALN through the medium of Welsh I am a teacher at a Welsh Primary School and see a number of ALN children moving into English-medium education in order to get the support before moving to English Secondary. We have a number of ALN pupils who would benefit from this when moving to Ysgol Garth Olwg in year.

Er fy mod yn hapus iawn bod y Cyngor wedi gweld yr angen i sicrhau cydraddoldeb i blant ag ADY dwys yn y sector Gymraeg, dwi'n poeni nad oes digon o wybodaeth ynglyn a pha math o ADY fydd y dosbarth yn cefnogi. Mae dosbarthiadau ADY y Sir fel arfer wedi ei categoreiddio yn ol angen - e.e. dwys a chymhleth, iaith a lleferydd, angehnon emosiynol ac ymddygiad, Awtistiaeth - fel bod y dysgwyr yn medru cael mewnbwn ac arbenigedd penodol. I fe'r syniad yw bod plant o wahanol fathau o ADY i gyd yn cael eu

cymysgu yn y dosbarth yma? Dydy hyn ddim yn hollol glir yn y wybodaeth. - Although I am very happy that the Council has seen the need to ensure equality for children with intensive ALN in the Welsh language sector, I am concerned that there is not enough information about what kind of ALN the class will support. The County's ALN classes are usually categorised according to need e.g. severe and complex, speech and language, social emotional behavioural, Autism - so that learners can have specific input and expertise. If the idea is that children of different types of ALN are all mixed in this class? This is not entirely clear in the information

Baswn i ddim yn cefnogi dosbarth hollol gymysg o anghenion a thros ystod oedran mor eang - a dydy hyn ddim yn dangos cydraddoldeb gyda'r sector Saesneg. Dwi yn hollol gefnogol o sefydlu dosbarth. - I wouldn't support a completely mixed class of needs and over such a wide age range – and this does not show parity with the English sector. I'm totally supportive of setting up a class.

ADY ar y safle, ond ddim yn siwr yn ol y categoraiddio. Does dim gwybodaeth yn y pecyn chwaith yn nodi pam Cyfnod Allweddol 3/4 a dewiswyd yn hytrach na'r oedran Cynradd - efallai bod data yn dangos hyn ond nid yw hyn yn glir.- ALN on site, but not sure in the categorisation. There is also no information in the pack stating why Key Stage 3/4 was chosen rather than the Primary age – data may show this but this is not clear.

Dylai pawb cael y cyfle i ddysgu trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, petai nhw'n alluog neu petai nhwn cael anghenion dysgu ychwanegol ac angen ychydig mwy o Cymorth.- Everyone should have the opportunity to learn through the medium of Welsh, whether they are able or have additional learning needs and need a little more support.

Please let us know the reasons for your choice:

My child had this 'informally' at Garth Olwg. Will be good for parents / children coming behind to have a formal arrangement and option to access special education in Welsh, and on a mainstream campus.

I'm a Special Needs Support Higher Level Teaching Assistant and I work in Special Needs Resource Base. I believe that majority of English and Welsh medium schools need to be supported and have the resources/ units/bases in their schools. Without covid-19, there was still a substantial percentage of children needing these ALN units, and now due to covid-19 the percentage of children needing these bases/units have increased tremendously. These units not only give the children who are able to access them, they give them the support and independents they need. Which they can not access in a mainstream class. The amount of children I've seen that's come from mainstream to a SRB and then able to gain the ability for them either to be back integrated into mainstream or been able to have diagnosis to be moved to special needs school. Welsh medium schools need these just as much as English medium schools.

There is no current base or support in RCT for Welsh medium education and new ALNET Act means the authority need to act and provide where possible. Increase of specialist teachers to the school.

Teaches mainstream children about celebrating difference.

I don't know what ALN means. We're not all up with your jargon.

Mae diffyg cydraddoldeb yn y system ar hyn o bryd o ran y ddarpariaeth ychwanegol sydd ar gael I ddysgwyr trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg o'i gymharu â'r ddarpariaeth cyfrwng

Saesneg. Mae hyn yn golygu bod dysgwyr ADY mewn ysgolion Cymraeg yn wynebu dewis na ddylent orfod gwneud, megis 1) Ymdopi â darpariaeth o safon is, 2) Symud i addysg cyfrwng Saesneg. - There is currently a lack of parity in the system in terms of the additional provision available to learners through the medium of Welsh compared to English-medium provision. This means that ALN learners in Welsh-medium schools face a choice that they should not have to make, such as 1) Coping with lower quality provision, 2) Moving to English-medium education.

Rwyf yn cytuno gyda'r cynnig ac o'r diwedd bydd darpariaeth yn y Gymraeg i ddisgyblion y Sir. Fodd bynnag, rwyf yn hynod o siomedig mai ar gyfer Cyfnod Allweddol 3 a 4 yn unig mae'r ddarpariaeth. - I agree with the proposal and at last there will be Welsh language provision for pupils in the County. However I am really disappointed that the provision is for Key Stage 3/4 only.

Ble mae'r cydraddoldeb ar gyfer disgyblion oed cynradd? Ble mae'r ddarpariaeth arbenigol ar eu cyfer nhw? - Where is the equality for primary age pupils? Where is the specialist provision for them?

Gyda'r Ddeddf ADY newydd - rhaid rhoi cydraddoldeb i'r ddwy iaith ac mae dyletswydd ar yr awdurdod i ddarparu hynny. With the new ALN Act – equality must be given to both languages and the authority has a duty to provide that.

Braf gweld bod yr awdurdod yn ystyried darpariaeth yn y Gymraeg, er ei fod wedi ei gyfyngu i dim on 14 o blant. - It is pleasing to see that the authority is considering Welsh language provision, although it is limited to 14 children.

Please state any alternative options, additional views or points which you would like to be taken into account:

I would be also very supportive of developing Primary phase WM classes too

Given Garth Olwg is a 3-19 school, provision for younger pupils must be a logical extension

The siting of the support in Garth Olwg is a positive proposal, building on the existing support provision and making the most of its central role in the community and new 3-19 status.

ALN class would be beneficial to children through the medium of Welsh from age 3 up. I have 4 children with additional needs and my oldest 2 who have no left education were failed within the mainstream system.

I would like the local dialect to be taught in Welsh medium schools. My children live in Pontypridd but have always been taught the Northern dialect as correct and the southern dialect as incorrect.

I have no alternative options, children should be able to have the access for a ALN which children have in a English medium school.

A stand alone unit that is not part of a mainstream school.

Will this increase workload for ALN staff at Garth Olwg? How will traffic be managed as pupils taxi'd in. Will Governing Body be responsible or LEA?

Pam dewiswyd Cyfnod Allweddol 3 a 4? Beth fydd categori yr ADY yn y dosbarth? Ydy 1 athrawes a 2 LSA yn ddigonol ar gyfer 14 plentyn ag anghenion dwys a chymhleth

a/neu anghenion emosiynol ac ymddygiad dwys? Yn ol y wybodaeth yn y pecyn, gallech cael plant BI7 ADY mewn gyda plant BI1 ydy hyn wir yn bosib ac i'r gorau? Oes bosib cael 1 dosbarth CA3 ac 1 dosbarth CA4? - Why were Key Stages 3 and 4 chosen? What will be the ALN category in the class? Are 1 teacher and 2 LSA adequate for 14 children with profound and complex needs and/or emotional and severe behaviour needs? According to the information in the pack, you could have year 11 children in with year 7 children. Is this really possible and for the best? Can there be 1 KS3 class and 1 KS4 class?

Please state any alternative options, additional views or points which you would like to be taken into account:

Why does it have to be within a mainstream school? Surely a stand alone unit would be more beneficial to all.

Assessments with relevant professionals should be made more accessible to the school for their pupils. I am one of many that have had to go privately for a diagnosis that can and should be carried out by the school

I don't believe it's a sensible use of funds when such a minority of people in RCT speak Welsh.

Rather than setting up a dedicated department, one to one tutoring would be a better option.

Gweler fy sylwadau ar y dudalen flaenorol. Balch iawn bod yr awdurdod yn dechrau darparu trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg ond mae'n destun pryder nad oes unrhyw uned/ddosbarth arbenigol ar gyfer plant oed cynradd. Rhaid ystyried cydraddoldeb yn y Gymraeg i ddisgyblion a chanddynt ADY - ,beth am y ddeddf? Hefyd - beth fydd arbenigedd yr uned? Ai ymddygiad? Ai awtistiaeth? Ai anawsterau meddygol? - See my comments on the previous page. I am pleased that the authority is beginning to provide through the medium of Welsh but it is worrying that there is no specialist unit/class for primary age children. Equality in Welsh must be considered for pupils with ALN - what about the act? Also - what will be the unit's expertise? Is it behaviour? Is it autism? Are medical difficulties?

1. Ble mae'r ddarpariaeth ar gyfer plant oed cynradd? 2. Beth yn benodol fydd anawsterau'r plant? O brofiad, mae anghenion yn amrywio'n fawr felly pa anghenion y bydd y dosbarth cynnal dysgu'n canolbwyntio arnynt? 3. Os oes 44 dosbarth cynnal dysgu trwy gyfrwng y Saesneg yn ogystal ag ysgolion arbennig ac unedau, sut gellir cyfiawnhau dim ond lle ar gyfer 14 disgybl mewn 1 dosbarth a dim byd o gwbl ar gyfer plant cynradd? - 1. Where is the provision for primary age children? 2. What specifically will be the children's difficulties? From experience, needs vary widely so what needs will the learning support class focus on? 3. If there are 44 LSCs through the medium of English as well as special schools and units, how can only a place for 14 pupils in 1 class be justified and nothing at all for primary children?

Under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, the Council has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. How would the Council's proposal affect you because of your:

1. Sex

2. Age
3. Ethnicity
4. Disability
5. Sexuality
6. Religion / Belief
7. Gender identity
8. Relationship status
9. Pregnancy
10. Preferred language

N/A

None

N/A

N/A

N/A

10. Preferred language. Undermine the Welsh language spoken at the school.

10. This will be detrimental to the use of the Welsh language within the school.

laith o ddewis. - Language of choice.

2. Oed - mae'r ddarpariaeth dim ond ar gyfer plant oed uwchradd 10. laith - er bod y ddarpariaeth yn y Gymraeg, mae angen cydraddoldeb ar blant yr ardal er mwyn cael mynediad i addysg arbenigol o 3-11 oed hefyd. - 2. Age – provision is only for secondary age children 10. Language - although provision is in Welsh, children in the area also need equality to access specialist education from the age of 3-11.

Dwi'n anabl felly hoffwn I weld hygyrchedd penodol? Digonedd o llefydd parcio, rampiau ac ati! - I'm disabled so I'd like to see a certain accessibility? Plenty of parking spaces, ramps etc!

laith o ddewis ,rhaid rhoi dewis i pawb. Anabledd - gall plant gyda anabledd dysgu colli mas ar opportunities, os nad oes cyfle iddyn nhw dysgu trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg - Language of choice, everyone must be given a choice. Disability - children with a learning disability can miss out on opportunities, if there is no opportunity for them to learn through the medium of Welsh

Bydd hyn yn ffafrio i lefel cydraddolbed o ran iaith dewisol. Ar hyn o bryd mae hyn yn anghybwys. - This will favour an equalised level of preferred language. At the moment this is unbalanced.

With regards to the Council's proposal, and the impact it may have, please let us know:

If you feel it could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive or Negative) and if in any way, it treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language? How positive effects could be increased, or negative effects be decreased?

It would support the development of the Welsh language to all - currently it sometimes seems that WM education is not suitable for those with any form of learning difficulty causing pupils to become disaffected and families less than supported.

This provision for ALN through the Medium of Welsh is to be applauded and will certainly help promote the language. But all the Council's services for ALN should be available in both languages.

The opportunity here is to considerably improve Welsh language provision not only for learners with ALN but support those who also come from non-Welsh-speaking homes who perhaps have had limited support over the difficulties of the pandemic.

With regards to the Council's proposal, and the impact it may have, please let us know: If you feel it could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive or Negative) and if in any way, it treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?

How positive effects could be increased, or negative effects be decreased?

This is a huge positive enabling those Welsh learners who require the additional support to receive it rather than ending up transferring to the English department. There needs to be more of these classes.

Parents can choose to teach their children Welsh even with additional needs

Due there being no ALN classes currently through the medium of Welsh this has resulted in a failing for many children. At the end of the day we live in Wales why are there no Welsh medium ALN classes???

Better understanding of the Welsh language, creating more opportunities to succeed in other subjects within the Welsh schools curriculum.

It's a positive move. My child has become a part of the local Welsh community through being.

included and supported to learn in Welsh language education, albeit adapted to meet his educational needs.

This promotes Welsh.

Thus will have a negative impact on the use of the Welsh language within the school.

Defnydd cadarnhaol i ddechrau darparu addysg ac arbenigedd ADY yn gyffelyb a'r ochr Saesneg. Yn meddwl na fydd plant rhagor yn gorfod gadael y sector Cymraeg er mwyn cael arbenigedd mewnbyn - Positive use to begin to provide ALN education and expertise similar to the English side. This means that children will no longer have to leave the Welsh sector in order to gain specialist input

ADY - ALN

Mae angen sicrhau bod gwasanaethau eraill yn y cyngor yn galluogi pobl i ddefnyddio'r iaith o'u dewis. Mae'r Cyngor wedi gwneud hyn rhywfaint ond dylent barhau i aenlu at wasanaeth lawn ddwyieithog. Awgrymnir bod y Cyngor yn ystyried cefnogi busnesau lleol hefyd i ddefnyddio'r. Gymraeg lle bon'n bosib er mwyn cynyddu'r amllder o weld Cymraeg ysgrifenedig a chlywed Cymraeg achlysurol yn cael ei ddefnyddio tu hwnt i'r Cyngor ac ysgolion Dyma'r cam cyntaf yn y ddarpariaeth Gymraeg sy'n dda o beth ond sionedig iawn mai dyma'r unig ddarpariaeth yn y sir. Beth am ddisgyblion cynradd? Nid oes gan siaradwyr Cymraeg yr un cyfleoedd I gael addysg wedi'i theilwra os oes ganddynt anghenion penodol iawn. Mae angen tegwch ar bob un plentyn. - There is a need to ensure that other services in the council enable people to use the language of their

choice. The Council has done this somewhat but should continue to add to a fully bilingual service. It is suggested that the Council also consider supporting local businesses to use Welsh where possible to increase the frequency of seeing written Welsh and hearing occasional Welsh being used beyond the Council and schools. This is the first step in Welsh-medium provision which is good what's disappointing is that this is the only provision within the Authority. What about primary pupils? Welsh speakers do not have the same opportunities for tailored education if they have very specific needs. Every single child needs fairness.

Braf gweld bod yr awdurdod yn dechrau ystyried dosbarthiadau trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg i blant ADY ond mae llawer o waith i'w wneud er mwyn cydymffurfio a'r ddeddf ALNET. - It is pleasing to see that the authority is beginning to consider classes through the medium of Welsh for ALN children but there is much work to be done in order to comply with the ALNET act.

Please indicate who you are (Please indicate who you are (e.g. parent/carer of a pupil at named school, governor at named school etc.))

RCT NEU branch Secretary

Governor at Ysgol Garth Olwg and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castellau

I am a parent at the school.

Parent of children in heol y celyn

staff ysgol clwstwr Garth Olwg

Parent of children in PSN

Athrawes ysgol Gynradd yn y clwstwr

Athro yn RCT

Welsh_Medium_Learning_Support_Class

Rhiant (ysgol Gynradd Castellau)

Parent. Child has moved to special school for 6th form, but has one day a week at Garth Olwg.

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Evan James

Athro

12 x Parents/carers of children at Ysgol Garth Olwg

Resident

Estyn's response to the proposal by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Council to enhance Welsh medium Learning Support Class provision

Introduction

This report has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales.

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultation documents to Estyn. However, Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters.

Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and has produced the following response to the information provided by the proposer.

Summary/ Conclusion

The proposal is likely to maintain or improve the standard of education provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf because:

It provides a further option for educating a small number of pupils with significant additional learning needs through the medium of Welsh. Such an option does not currently exist in RCT.

It helps ensure that RCT meets its obligations under the Additional Learning Needs Education Tribunal (ALNET) Act (2018) to provide a bilingual additional learning needs system.

Description and benefits

The proposer has given a clear rationale for the proposal based on the fact that there is currently no provision in a Learning Support Class (LSC) for Welsh medium learners, although there are 44 LSCs across RCT for English medium learners. It would have been helpful if the proposer had specified the number of Welsh medium learners in the local authority compared to the number of English medium learners as this would have made the discrepancy in provision even more striking.

The proposer has provided a detailed description of the proposal and its projected timetable for statutory procedures and for implementation. There are no interim arrangements since the proposal is to open an LSC for up to 14 key stage 3/4 pupils in the all-through Welsh medium Ysgol Garth Olwg using existing facilities in that school from September 2022.

Pupils who are likely to use the new LSC must currently be being taught either in mainstream Welsh medium classes or in English medium LSCs elsewhere. This information isn't provided in the proposal.

The expected benefits and disadvantages compared with the status quo are set out briefly but clearly. For example, there will be increased transport costs, because a small number of pupils who may currently be being taught in their catchment school may have to be transported to Ysgol Garth Olwg near Pontypridd instead.

A couple of suitable alternatives have been considered: either providing more funding to mainstream schools to meet the needs of the Welsh medium pupils with significant additional learning needs or establishing the new LSC in a different location. The first option is likely to lead to fragmented provision. Three reasons are given why Ysgol Garth Olwg has been selected for the new LSC: its inclusive practice, its success in educating pupils with additional learning needs and its current surplus capacity. However, no evidence is given to support the first two assertions, which is a weakness of the proposal. There should certainly be the necessary capacity within Ysgol Garth Olwg as this relatively new 3-19 school has capacity for 1,434 pupils (1,110 in the secondary phase and 324 in the primary phase) while projections suggest a maximum total of 1,242 pupils by 2024/25, leaving a minimum of 192 surplus places (although LSC places will require more space than mainstream places).

There is no comment in the proposal about the possibility of more parents wanting to educate their children through the medium of Welsh and whether this might impact on the current and future surplus capacity at Ysgol Garth Olwg.

Benefits of the proposal include the potential impact on the rest of the school of having specialist additional learning needs expertise on site as well as the small decrease in surplus capacity. The potential to reduce exclusions in the local authority is also mentioned as a benefit. However, there are two risks associated with the proposal which aren't considered. Firstly, having a single Welsh medium LSC in the whole of RCT is likely to mean that some pupils attending the new LSC would have to travel significant distances every school day. It is possible that some parents might refuse to allow their children to attend the new LSC if they live too far away from it. Secondly, the employment benefit of having one teacher and two teaching assistants to run the new LSC is mentioned, but not the impact of this on the current peripatetic Welsh medium additional learning needs support being provided in the local authority.

The proposal clearly supports the targets within the local authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and helps ii to meet the obligations of ALNET (2018).

The financial costs of the proposal could be clearer. No costs are specified beyond the total amounts spent in RCT on the existing 44 LSCs, 4 special schools and 2 pupil referral units, as well as the additional funding given to mainstream schools to enhance capacity for educating pupils with additional learning needs. It isn't clear whether funding for the new LSC will come from existing budgets, from elsewhere within the education budget or from an increase to the overall education budget. While ii is true that the exact cost of an LSC will depend upon the number of pupils in ii and their needs, the proposal specifies that there will be a teacher and two teaching assistants in the LSC and so an estimated cost must be available and could have been included and explained within the proposal.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The proposer has considered the likely impact of the proposal on the quality and standards in education appropriately. If pupils who are currently struggling to learn in mainstream Welsh medium schools or are having to learn in English in another LSC when their preferred language of learning is Welsh, can instead be taught in a Welsh medium facility tailored to their individual needs, this is highly likely to improve their own learning experience as well as having a positive impact on the schools they are in now. The proposal makes clear the potential added benefits to Ysgol Garth Olwg of having additional learning needs expertise on site and refers to Estyn's Common Inspection Framework as highlighting the positive impact that this expertise can have on enhancing practice and improving outcomes for learners with ALN across the whole school.

The proposal does not refer to Estyn inspection reports on the basis that there has been no inspection since the all-through Ysgol Garth Olwg was created in 2019. However, the proposal could have referred to previous inspection reports for the original secondary and primary schools on the site in providing evidence for why Ysgol Garth Olwg is an appropriate school to host the new LSC.

There are clear likely benefits to the proposal for the delivery of the full curriculum to the pupils with significant additional learning needs who will attend the new LSC. The proposal states that there may be some limited disruption to Ysgol Garth Olwg as a consequence of hosting the LSC, but that this will be outweighed by the likely benefits. What is, perhaps, surprising is that it isn't clear to what extent the host school supports the proposal as there is no statement about this.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME - CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO CREATE A NEW COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL IN GLYNCOCH

21ST MARCH 2022

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR J BONETTO, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Author(s):

Lisa Howell, 21st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager
Andrea Richards, Service Director of 21st Century Schools and Transformation

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Members of the outcome of the recent consultation in respect of proposal to:
- Amalgamate Cefn Primary and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools. The amalgamation will be achieved by closing the two existing primary schools and opening a new, bigger community primary school to replace them.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the information contained within the attached Consultation Report, which includes a summary of correspondence received during the consultation exercise, including the full response from Estyn, feedback received from the online survey, and notes of the meetings held.
- 2.2 Agree to progress the proposals to the next stage of the consultation process by issuing an appropriate Statutory Notice which will trigger the start of the Objection Period.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To progress the proposal in accordance with the process outlined in Welsh Government legislative guidance (the School Organisation Code 011/2008).

- 3.2 To increase capacity and improve the quality of primary education provision available to learners in the Glyncoch area of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Members will recall that, at the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13th December 2021, approval was given to begin a statutory process to formally consult on a proposal to improve and increase education provision in the Glyncoch area by investing in a new school by amalgamating Cefn Primary and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools. The amalgamation will be achieved by closing the two existing primary schools and opening a new, bigger community primary school to replace them.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Consultation Report, prepared in respect of this proposal, is attached at Appendix 1 for your attention. It contains information in respect of meetings held to discuss the proposal, with copies of the notes taken at these meetings; it contains Estyn's full response to the proposal and the clarification to the response; it also contains a summary of the online survey responses received during the consultation period and where required the appropriate clarification to any issues raised.
- 5.2 This consultation process resulted in 34 written responses being received - 32 via the online survey that was available for the duration of the consultation period on the RCT website, and 2 e-mails received via the school planning mailbox. Due to Covid restrictions, meetings with the community could not be held. However, meetings with the staff, governors and pupils were held virtually.
- 5.3 Out of the 34 responses received, 25 were in agreement with the proposal, 6 respondents were not in agreement, 2 respondents were unsure, and one did not provide a response to this question. Overall, the responses were overwhelmingly positive with 74% in favour of the proposal to build a new school. To confirm, all of the comments and issues raised during this consultation process have been reviewed by Cabinet Members.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 Equality and Community Impact Assessments were prepared in respect of this proposal and were published, and can still be viewed, on the Council's website together with the Consultation Document that outlines the proposal in detail.
- 6.2 In summary, the outcome of Equality Impact Assessment identified positive and neutral impacts, and no negative impacts, upon the protected characteristics and so it was deemed that approval would be sought to continue to implement the proposal. To confirm, the Action Plan will continue to be reviewed throughout the duration of the project delivery period.

- 6.3 As part of seeking views on the school proposals, the consultation survey, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, also included a further question in compliance with the Council's statutory obligations which was 'The Council has a legal duty to look at how it's decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. How would the Council's proposal affect you? All those that responded to this question stated that there would be a positive or no impact on them as a result of the proposals.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment was prepared in respect of this proposal and published, and can still be viewed, on the Council's website together with the Consultation Document that outlines the proposal in detail. The link is below.
- 7.2 In summary, the outcome of the assessment found that the proposal will assist with delivering the targets outlined in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's (RCTCBC's) current (2017 to 2022) and new (2022 to 2032) Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and will support the aim of Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 target of one million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050.
- 7.3 As part of seeking views on the school proposals, the consultation survey, in accordance with the Welsh Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, also included further questions in compliance with the Council's statutory obligations which were could the proposals impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh language (Positive or Negative) and if in any way, they treat the Welsh language less favourably than the English language? Questions also asked were how positive effects could be increased, or negative effects be decreased? All those that responded to these questions stated that there would be a positive or no impact on the Welsh language as a result of implementing the proposals.

8. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1 The consultation process in respect of this proposal has been undertaken under the arrangements outlined in the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, which was introduced on 1st November 2018 and replaced the October 2013 version. These arrangements stipulate that a Consultation Report must be prepared prior to the publication of any Statutory Notices which will progress the proposal. It further states that Statutory Notices be published within 26 weeks of the end of the consultation period.

9. THE STATUTORY PROCESS

- 9.1 The Statutory Notice for this proposal will refer to:

- Amalgamate Cefn Primary and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools. The amalgamation will be achieved by closing the two existing primary schools and opening a new, bigger community primary school to replace them.
- 9.2 If agreed, and subject to the matter not being called in for consideration by Scrutiny, the Statutory Notice will be published on 4th April 2022 and will allow for a minimum 28 day period for objections, ending on 11th May 2022.
- 9.3 If any objections are received during this period, in accordance with the aforementioned Code, an Objections Report will be prepared. This matter will then be reported to a future meeting of Cabinet, in June or July of this year, for Members to receive and consider the Objections Report and to make a final decision on this proposal.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 If the proposal proceeds, a significant capital investment will be required in the region of circa £9 million to construct the new school. The funding package will continue to be developed alongside the consultation and decision-making process. The new school will be funded by the Council and Welsh Government via the Mutual Investment Model (MIM) funding stream which is part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, previously called the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 11.1 Part 1 of the Education Act 1996 (“the 1996 Act”) imposes a number of general duties on all local authorities in Wales. The general duty in section 13 of the 1996 Act is to contribute (so far as the Council’s powers enable them to do so) towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community by ensuring that efficient primary education and secondary education is available to meet the needs of the population of their area.
- 11.2 Section 13A(3) of the 1996 Act states that a local authority in Wales must ensure that their relevant education and training functions are exercised by the authority with a view to promoting high standards, and the fulfilment of learning potential by every person to whom the subsection applies, including those who are of compulsory school age or are below school age and are registered as pupils at schools maintained by the authority.
- 11.3 Section 14 of the 1996 Act requires the Council to secure sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education in the Council’s area. Schools available for an area shall not be regarded as sufficient unless they are sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide all pupils with an appropriate education.

- 11.4 Appropriate education means education which offers such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of (a) the pupils' different ages, abilities and aptitudes; and (b) the different periods for which they may be expected to remain at school, including practical instruction and training appropriate to their different needs.
- 11.5 Powers for councils to develop school organisation proposals are governed by the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the Code 011/2018. (Local authorities must, when exercising functions under Part 3 of the 2013 Act, act in accordance with any relevant requirements contained in the Code and must have regard to any relevant guidelines contained in it. A copy of the Code is found here:
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-10/schoolorganisation-code-second-edition.pdf>

12. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

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

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

- Ensuring we have good schools, so all children have access to a great education.

- 12.2 Due regard has been made to all seven wellbeing goals and the Five Ways of Working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which requires the Council to think about the long-term impact of decisions, on communities to prevent consistent issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

This proposal would contribute to achieving the wellbeing goals by:

- Improving sustainability of school buildings in the Council portfolio through a commitment to achieving a zero-carbon building and constructing to BREEAM excellent.
- Providing additional school places to meet WG targets and to promote the Welsh language in the Community.
- Opening new community facilities that would create opportunities for local people to utilise.

This proposal would achieve the five ways of working by:

- Creating a new school environment that can deliver the new Curriculum for Wales.
- Providing first class learning facilities for pupils and the wider community and contribute towards a healthier Wales by providing additional outdoor sport facilities for pupils.

- Contributing towards a prosperous Wales by committing to opportunities for local tradespeople and to use local resources, wherever possible to build the new school.
- Engaging with the community on a thorough consultation with opportunities for all stakeholders in the Community to engage throughout the process.

12.3 The Equality Impact Assessment includes further detail on the contribution of the proposal to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act and this document formed an integral part of the consultation document.

13. CONCLUSION

13.1 Members are asked to consider the contents of the attached Consultation Report, and to give officers approval to publish an appropriate Statutory Notice on 4th April 2022 to progress this proposal.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21st MARCH 2022

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN
DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR J
BONETTO, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES**

Background papers:

The background papers included as appendices to the report are:

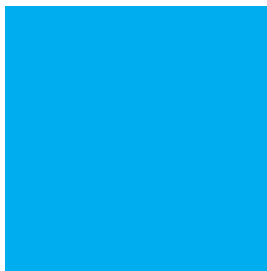
- Consultation Report

Officer to contact:

Lisa Howell, 21st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager

This page is intentionally left blank

21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS



CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO AMALGAMATE CEFN AND CRAIG-YR-HESG PRIMARY SCHOOLS TO CREATE A NEW COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL ON A NEW SITE



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CONSULTATION REPORT

Proposal: to amalgamate Cefn Primary and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools. The amalgamation will be achieved by closing the two existing primary schools and opening a new, bigger community primary school to replace them.

1. Purpose of the Consultation Report

This report is prepared in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, statutory document 011/2018. Its purpose is to inform the outcome of the consultation held during the period 10th January 2022 and 21st February 2022 between all stakeholders and interested parties listed below.

2. Who did we consult with?

A copy of a consultation document, which fully outlined and explained our proposal, was sent to the following stakeholders. The document was also published on the Council website.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The federated Governing Body of Cefn Primary School and Craig yr Hesg Primary School.• Parents/carers, prospective parents/carers where possible, and staff members of Cefn Primary School and Craig yr Hesg Primary School.• Pupils of Cefn Primary School and Craig yr Hesg Primary School.• Other governing bodies of neighbouring primary schools.• Neighbouring local authorities.• The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authorities.• Welsh Ministers.• Members of the Senedd for the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf constituencies and regional Members of the Senedd for the area. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members of Parliament for the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf constituencies.• Estyn.• Teaching and staff trade unions.• Central South Consortium Joint Education Service.• Police and Crime Commissioner for the area.• Childcare providers.• Mudiad Meithrin.• Menter Iaith.• Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.• Children and Young People's Partnership.• Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.• Welsh Language Commissioner. |
|--|--|

The Proposal

It is being proposed that Cefn and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools are amalgamated. The amalgamation will be achieved by closing the two existing schools and opening a new community primary school to replace them. The new school will be built on Craig yr Hesg Primary School site and the land adjacent to it (the former site of the Ty Gwyn Pupil Referral Unit).

The new school will cater for children aged between 3 and 11 years of age who require English medium education. It will have a proposed admissions number of 51 pupils per year group, and an overall capacity of 360 (plus nursery).

Details of the proposal and the rationale behind it are fully outlined in the consultation document and Impact Assessments that were circulated to all the stakeholders. The link to these documents is below:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/GetInvolved/Consultations/CurrentConsultations/PropoaltoamalgamateCefnPrimaryandCraigyrHesgPrimarySchools.aspx>

3. The Consultation Process

All stakeholders identified in Section 2 overleaf were sent a link to electronic copies of our consultation documentation, and those that requested paper copies received them. The following meetings were also convened:

School(s) Affected	Group	Time/Date	Venue
Cefn Primary and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools	Federated Governing Body and Staff	4:30pm, Tuesday 18 th January	Microsoft Teams
Cefn Primary School	School Council	11:00am, Wednesday 19 th January	Microsoft Teams / Zoom
Craig yr Hesg Primary School	School Council	10:00am, Wednesday 19 th January	Microsoft Teams / Zoom

Meetings were held virtually due to Covid-19 restrictions. Notes of the above meetings were taken and are attached as Appendix 2. These notes record questions raised, comments and statements made during the meeting, with the responses provided where appropriate. Helpfully the staff and Governing Body providing questions in advance of the meeting, these and the relevant responses are also recorded.

To ensure the pupils of both schools understood the information within the proposal, a young person's version of the consultation document was created, and hard copies were provided to the school to distribute to each pupil. Additionally, to further support and encourage pupil engagement, a video of the young person's consultation

document was created and played during the consultation meetings. This was also subsequently sent to the school to enable it to be shared with the rest of the pupils.

To view the video, click here:

Welsh - <https://youtu.be/MstBhEWS6TU>

English - <https://youtu.be/DefGDj5jEd>

4. Summary of Consultation Responses

Responses to the matters raised at the consultation meetings outlined above are, as indicated, summarised in the notes of the meetings attached as Appendix 2. In addition, 34 written responses were received during the consultation period, 32 via the online survey which was available for the duration of the consultation phase, plus 2 responses via email. Out of the 34 written responses 25 were in favour of the proposals, 6 were against the proposals, 2 were unsure and one did not provide a response to this question.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, the Council has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. So as part of seeking views on the school organisation proposals, the consultation also included a question in compliance with the Council's statutory obligations asking '*how would the Council's proposal affect you?*' All those that responded to this question stated that there would be a positive or no impact on them as a result of implementing the proposals.

In addition, the consultation survey, in accordance with the Welsh Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, also included further questions in compliance with the Council's statutory obligations which asked could the proposals impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive or Negative) and if in any way, *they treat the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?* Also asked were *how positive effects could be increased, or negative effects be decreased?* All those that responded to these questions stated that there would be a positive or no impact on the Welsh Language as a result of implementing the proposals.

In accordance with the Code, a summary of the responses received are detailed in the table below and where issues have been raised, these have been responded to, where applicable, by means of clarification with supporting reasons.

Summary of responses and issues raised in response to the question 'Do you agree with the proposal?'

Comments/Issues	Clarification if required
It would be better for children and staff to combine. Children would have the best of both, schools and staff could be working from one site alone.	

<p>The decision to build the new school right next to a very busy road will have a negative impact on the children's health. The Cefn primary location with its opportunity of Forrest school sessions, big outdoor space would be much more in line what has been tried so hard to establish over the years.</p>	<p>The new school will be built on the existing Craig yr Hesg school site and the land adjacent to it, so there is already a school at this location.</p> <p>As referenced in the consultation document there are a number of site constraints on the Cefn Primary school, including location and topography, precluding it from accommodating a new larger school. The preferred site will house the new, larger and fully accessible school delivering all of the requirements in compliance with Building Bulletin 99 and the Equality Act 2010.</p>
<p>The proposal makes sense it will bring the community together.</p>	
<p>Both schools are old and are no longer fit for purpose. Glyncoch seems to be the forgotten area of RCT - how lovely to have a brand new school for our children.</p>	
<p>People Park everywhere down there now on pick up drop offs it will be absolutely crazy to have even more there! It's dangerous enough now without merging the schools.</p>	<p>The specific detail of the transport and traffic management of the site will be developed subject to approval and as the proposal is progressed.</p> <p>A Traffic Impact Assessment will be carried out as a part of the design process and the Highway Authority must be satisfied with the detail and recommendations that will be included within this document. All recommendations included within the report will be incorporated into the design of the new school site.</p>
<p>NASUWT Cymru expects that RCT as the employer will ensure that the jobs and livelihoods of existing teachers who wish to be employed in the new school are protected and teachers are safeguarded from detriment during the restructuring process. NASUWT will challenge "Fire and Rehire" practices which reduce morale and productivity. The consultation document identifies risks for staff in terms of employment (p.17), but it is encouraging to note on page 27 that there is reference to "slotting in". NASUWT Cymru expects teachers to be slotted into suitable roles within the school and given the forecast of increased pupil numbers and a commitment to teaching pupils in age related groups this should be a priority. We agree with the suggestion that there will be excellent opportunities for staff interaction, coordination and the sharing of expertise. Existing teachers have the skills, a proven loyalty and commitment to improve standards and build the 21st Century school ethos.</p>	<p>The Council has well established management of change processes and has demonstrated its commitment to minimising any adverse impact on the workforce across many 21st century school developments.</p>

<p>I know this has got to happen but the children from the top Cefn primary school will get soaked in the wet weather.</p>	<p>This is the case for the majority of pupils that live within the County Borough. Walking to school is encouraged as this contributes to the delivery of the Active Travel Act and the health and well-being agenda. However, it is acknowledged that during the winter months appropriate wet weather clothing will be required.</p>
<p>Over the last decade community groups along with both school leaders and staff have all been playing their part in the reinvigoration of a much-maligned village. To bring the village together, not the `top` or the `bottom` but Glyncoch and to instil a passion within the next generation for learning and achievement, to make the children believe in themselves and be proud of where they come from.</p>	
<p>The plans for the layout of the building don't take into account the needs of pupils. The " Heart" is a wonderful design concept on paper, very pretty indeed, but like many flights of architectural fancy have very little basis in practicality. There will be areas for pupils with special needs, but many of the pupils in the schools, whilst falling short of the actual criteria for SEN, have complex often indefinable needs that require "timeout" in rooms that are quiet and sensory pleasing. The staff in the schools need to have a major input into the building layout plans. This requires the views of people who actually teach children.</p>	<p>The specific detail of the design of the new school will be developed subject to approval and as the proposal is progressed. Building Bulletin 99 is the industry standard and is used by the Welsh Government as the guide for determining the areas, spaces and functions required when designing a school.</p> <p>The design process will be undertaken in collaboration with the school staff and governing body and specialist colleagues working within Access and Inclusion.</p>
<p>I welcome the proposal to build a brand new school for Glyncoch using Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning funding.</p>	
<p>Would like to see flying start joining the school, it would provide the natural progression to primary education.</p>	<p>Flying Start will remain in its current location, however links with the school are key and can be further forged with the Headteacher and Flying Start management in relation to the new school.</p>

The View of Estyn (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Training in Wales) of the Overall Merits of the Proposal.

In compliance with the School Standards and Organisation 2018 School Organisation Code the Estyn's response to the consultation has been provided in full in Appendix 3. Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and have produced a response to the information provided by the proposer and other additional information such as data from Welsh Government and the views of the Regional Consortia which deliver school improvement services to the schools within the proposal. **It is Estyn's opinion that the proposals will maintain or improve the standard of education**

provision in the area by providing improved facilities for teaching and learning and helping the current federation's leadership to operate more effectively and efficiently.

Additionally, an in accordance with the Code, the areas of the response that require clarification are documented in the table below.

Estyn's Report	Clarification
<p>The local authority has provided a detailed description of the proposal, including the timetable for statutory procedures and for implementing the proposal. However, it is not clear enough within the proposal exactly where the new school will be built.</p>	<p>Within the consultation document it states, '<i>The new school building will be built on the existing Craig yr Hesg Primary School site and the land adjacent to it (the former site of the Ty Gwyn Pupil Referral Unit)</i>'. To clarify, it is proposed that the new school building, external areas, and car park will cover both the existing school site and the vacant land next door.</p>
<p>The proposal sets out the expected benefits and disadvantages in a clear and fair way compared with the status quo. However, the only risk identified is that of parents choosing to send their children to an alternative school. There appear to be other risks which are not considered in the risk management section of the proposals. For example, the increase in traffic at the new school site is one such risk and the proposer states that a 'drop-off area' to help reduce this risk is only 'under consideration' and requires 'further surveys and transport and traffic assessments.' If the drop-off area isn't included in the final plans, there is likely to be a negative impact on traffic around the new school site at certain times of the day.</p>	<p>The specific detail of the transport and traffic management of the site will be developed subject to approval and as the proposal is progressed.</p> <p>The proposals will be subject to continued scrutiny and can only proceed if approval from all statutory consultees, including the Planning Authority, is secured. A Traffic Impact Assessment will be carried out as a part of this process and the Highway Authority has to be satisfied with the detail and recommendations included within this document.</p>
<p>An additional risk could be the potential impact on Craig yr Hesg Primary School during the build phase, which is not discussed in the proposal.</p> <p>If the school is sited near Craig yr Hesg there could be considerable disruption to the operation of the school. The proposal does not give sufficient</p>	<p>The specific detail of the construction management plan has not yet been developed. However, it is anticipated that the new school building will be built upon the unoccupied site so that the disruption to Craig yr Hesg Primary will be minimal during the construction period.</p>

<p>consideration to the potential disruption to Craig yr Hesg Primary School during the construction phase and how this will be minimised.</p>	<p>The construction will be phased in such a way that the new school building will be constructed first, then occupied while the existing school building is demolished, allowing the external areas to be developed. RCT have successfully implemented this phased construction methodology on a number of new school builds.</p>
<p>The reasons for building such surplus capacity into the new school are not made clear in the proposals.</p>	<p>There are currently a number of pupils within Glyncoch attending out of catchment schools. Experience of delivering new schools had taught us that these developments have a 'magnet effect' encouraging a number of children to return to their in-catchment school.</p> <p>Also, additional space within the school provides the flexibility for community use allowing the school to become fully integrated within the locality. There are 2 Learning Support Classes within the school, and any surplus capacity will enhance the flexibility, space and resources to meet the needs of pupils with ALN within this mainstream setting.</p>

5. Assessment of Consultation

In view of the responses and comments received during the consultation period, a further assessment of the proposal, which is included within the consultation document, has been undertaken. The proposals have been revisited and the following matters have been reassessed:

- The likely impact of the proposals on the quality and standards of education;
- The likely impact on the community; and
- The likely effect of differing travelling arrangements.

After further consideration, the proposals remain to be the most appropriate and as such no amendments to the proposal have been made.

6. Conclusion

No information that has been presented during the consultation period is deemed to necessitate a change to the consultation document, and so the information remains unchanged. As such it is considered that this proposal should be wholly implemented with no amendments.

The recommendation of this report is that a statutory notice be published, as consulted upon with no modifications, in order to progress this proposal.

This page is intentionally left blank

Consultation to Amalgamate Cefn & Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools
Meeting with staff and governors of Cefn and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools
Tuesday 18th January 2022 @ 4:30pm
via MS Teams

Present:

Gaynor Davies	GD	Director of Education & Inclusion Services
Andrea Richards	AR	Service Director - 21 st Century Schools & Transformation
Lisa Howell	LH	21 st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager
Non Morgan	NM	School Organisation and Governance Team Leader
Nicola Goodman	NG	21 st Century Schools - Lead for Strategic Planning & MIM
Catherine Williams	CW	21 st Century Schools - Project Officer
Richard Bowen	RB	21 st Century Schools - Project Officer
Sarah Nicholls	SN	21 st Century Schools - Graduate Officer
Bethan Davies	BD	Human Resources Manager
Ellen Williams	EW	Human Resources Manager
Mrs Sarah Haggett	SH	Executive Headteacher- Cefn and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools
Mrs Emma Byers	EB	Cefn Primary School – Head of School
Miss Carrie Thomas	CT	Craig yr Hesg Primary School – Head of School
Staff and Governors		Staff and Governors from Cefn and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools

1. Welcome & Introductions

GD welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. Introductions were made.

2. Consultation Overview

GD provided the meeting with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the consultation document.

3. Staff and Governor Questions

Staff and Governors of Cefn and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools were invited to submit questions to SH prior to the meeting, which were subsequently shared with Council officers in preparation for the meeting. LH and NG read out the questions provided prior to the meeting and RCT Officers responded in turn. Attendees were also invited to interject with additional questions throughout this section of the meeting. The questions from staff / governors and responses provided by RCT officers are summarised below.

No.	Topic / Question	RCT Response
Staffing Structure		
1	What will the SLT structure of the new school be? i.e. what will happen to heads of school and executive headteacher roles?	<p>The structure of the new school will be proposed by the Headteacher and the temporary governing body. Once the budget is settled, the draft structure will be drawn up and then shared with governors / trade union representatives / staff through consultation meetings.</p> <p>The first stage of the process will be to appoint to the Headteacher role.</p>
2	What will staff structure look like at all levels?	As above – this will be determined as part of the managing change process.
3	Will all current staff keep their jobs? Will we be moved year groups? (And across phases)	The structure will be proposed by the Headteacher and agreed by governors. A change management process will be agreed. The structure will be shared with governors / trade union representatives / staff through consultation meetings.
4	Will staff have to re-apply for their jobs?	Staff will be expected to apply for positions on the new structure. In past processes, this has been ring fenced to internal staff in the first instance. Appointments will be made by the temporary governing body.
5	Will extra teaching staff be required?	This will depend on the number of pupils in the new school at the time of opening.
6	Will there be any retirement/redundancy offers/packages available?	HR will undertake individual consultation meetings with staff to consider their personal situations and the options available to them.
7	Are we in control of how the staff are structured?	HR would advise that a change management process is followed – to ensure fairness and consistency of approach – however it is the

No.	Topic / Question	RCT Response
		Governing Body's decision as to whether they take this advice.
8	Will the new school have a new governing body?	A temporary governing body would be created out of current serving governors at the school, who would need to request to be part of the temporary governing body. The Local Education Authority would then appoint parent governors. This temporary body will then undertake the work on the staffing structure mentioned earlier.
9	When would the temporary governing body be established, and when would it become permanent?	The new permanent governing body would be appointed when the new school opens. Federated and temporary governing bodies will need to run in tandem for those governors who request to be part of the temporary governing body.
School Organisation		
10	What will be the capacity of the new school? Will it be single or two form entry?	360 plus 45 nursery places plus 2 Learning Support Classes – admission number of 51.
11	Will children have to apply for a place in the new school?	No, children in the existing 2 schools will automatically transfer – no application process is needed for these pupils.
12	Will the school have a catchment area with pupils from Glyncoch having first choice?	Catchment area will be the same as the current catchment areas for Cefn and Craig yr Hesg primary schools.
13	How will the name, colours and logo of the school be determined?	These will be decisions for the temporary governing body. It would be great if pupils could contribute to these discussions. The name will need to be submitted to the Council for approval.
14	Will it just be Cefn and Craig yr Hesg or will more schools be joining us?	Yes, it will be only Cefn and Craig yr Hesg primary schools.

No.	Topic / Question	RCT Response
15	Will there be mixed year groups or 1 form entry?)	Admission number is 51 so likely to be mixed year groups but this will be dependent on the number of children per year group within the school.
16	Will there be a full-time nursery setting like we have now or a morning session then an afternoon session?	The school will determine whether full or part time nursery provision is established.
17	What is the estimated time for opening of the new school?	No later than September 2026 but hopefully sooner.
18	Is the new capacity of 360 plus 45 nursery places big enough?	Based on research by the 21 st Century Schools Team and the Data Team who look at pupil number projections, the proposed capacity of the new school is suitable to meet future demand.
19	Is the proposed capacity future proofed? Cefn site could be used for housing following its closure which would have an impact on the new school.	The new school has been scoped with future housing developments in mind. Given the sloping topography of the Cefn site this would not be attractive to developers for large scale development. To provide context, for every 100 houses built, we estimate 25 pupils requiring a school place.
Transition Arrangements		
20	How will children be placed as the development takes shape?	It is hoped that children will stay in their existing school buildings and transfer into the new building once it is complete.
21	How will disruption be kept to a minimum when the schools move into the new school building?	We try to target handover dates to coincide with school holiday periods with skips and packing crates being provided a while in advance to assist with early transition. A removals contractor undertakes the physical relocations.
22	Will there be money available to resource the school, do we start again	New furniture and ICT equipment is provided using Welsh Government funding formulae and RCT

No.	Topic / Question	RCT Response
	or bring existing equipment and resources with us?	standardised furniture schedule. Curriculum materials and resources should be packed and transferred.
23	How much time will be given to the schools to move into the building? Will inset days be provided?	To be agreed between the schools and the Director of Education and Inclusion Services at the time. A maximum of 2 days has been provided in previous schemes to avoid adversely impacting the education provision offered to learners.
24	The proposed opening date of September 2026 suggests the summer holiday would be used for moving resources across. Even with new furniture, the new building will feel like a sterile environment. Will there be an opportunity to make classrooms homely for the children?	<p>The use of colour in new 21st Century Schools is powerful and doesn't feel sterile. The time allowed for moving across will be dependent on how well progress is going with the construction of the new school.</p> <p>It was suggested that recently completed 21st Century Schools projects could be visited by staff. Images will also be shared with the Headteacher for wider circulation thereafter.</p> <p>There will need to be work done over the summer holiday to ensure the school is ready to accept children.</p>
Design of the New School		
25	Will there be sufficient outdoor space providing forest areas together with new state of the art equipment.	Due to use of the adjoining former Ty Gwyn site, the additional land available will give lots of opportunities for outdoor activities / spaces which will be developed by a landscape architect.
26	How will SEBD and Nurture children be catered for? -Will staff be involved in the designing of the classes etc	SEBD and Nurture classes currently at Cefn Primary School will transfer to the new building and designs will be developed in consultation with the school and RCT's Access and Inclusion Service in due course.

No.	Topic / Question	RCT Response
27	Will each class have designated storage for resources this can be lacking for resources within the foundation phase?	All RCT 21 st Century Schools projects have storage walls within each classroom space, providing plentiful storage. Additional storage provision is also provided via the loose furniture budget as required.
28	Who will get an input into the design of the new school?	RCT does have a 21 st Century Schools design standard. However, there will be regular meetings with the Headteacher and others to discuss design proposals from the outset of the design process to ensure it captures the requirements of the school.
29	Will the new school be more secure? i.e., Will it be harder for unwanted people to get in and cause damage?	One of the funding conditions is Secured by Design accreditation, which requires a 2.4-metre-high fence to secure the entire perimeter of the school site. Any spaces made available for community use would be self-contained to ensure the security of the rest of the school site.
30	Will the new school have a CCTV system that is monitored 24 hours a day?	CCTV will be installed on site and Sardis House central monitoring office is in operation 24 hours a day - some schools have chosen to buy into this service. Procuring this service for the new school would be a decision for the new governing body.
31	How will issues identified in previous new schools be addressed with this school?	Lessons have been learned from previous schemes and the 21 st Century Schools standard design has been improved over many years. This new school will be net zero carbon in operation which places emphasis on natural ventilation. Images of new schools were shared to illustrate how designs have developed.

No.	Topic / Question	RCT Response
32	Will each classroom have its own storage space?	All of RCT's new 21 st Century Schools include storage walls which are a storage solution within the classroom space that utilises fitted furniture. We no longer provide a separate storeroom per classroom. However, there will also be storage provided within the loose furniture and around the school building.
33	Will all classes have a door to access to the outdoors?	RCT standard design requirements request direct external access from all ground floor classroom spaces. This will be developed with the Headteacher as the design process starts.
34	Will there be intervention rooms for each key stage in mainstream?	RCT standard design requirements request a 'heart space' for each school which can operate as a flexible intervention space.
35	Where there are additional learning needs involved, an open space isn't suitable for intervention. How will children needing a quiet space be catered for in the new building?	Some children will need a quieter environment in some cases. There will be an opportunity to discuss these issues during design development. LSC provision will also offer additional support for children who require it. The use of furniture in other schools does allow for quiet areas within heart spaces.
36	Will the design be similar to that in Williamstown Primary School?	No, designs have developed considerably since the construction of Williamstown Primary School. We will also share images of our new schools following the meeting.
37	Will we have an ICT suite?	RCT standard design requirements request a 'heart space' for each school which will include flexible ICT provision. The entire building will also be Wi-Fi enabled, therefore each classroom will be able to operate as much ICT equipment as it requires. There will also be a C-

No.	Topic / Question	RCT Response
		Touch type provision in each classroom.
38	What sport facilities will we have?	Wherever possible, RCT 21 st Century Schools include a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and grass pitch. There will also be a multi-purpose main hall for dining, assemblies, and P.E. We will provide photos of these facilities at some of our new schools following the meeting.
Highways / Transport		
39	How will traffic and parking be managed?	This will be looked at as the design is developed. Where possible, parent pick up/drop off provision is provided.
40	I read that there will be a drive-in drop off and pick up point. How is this going to be monitored? Are school staff going to be expected to monitor the situation?	As above, where parent pick up/drop off provision is included within a school site, school staff are expected to monitor the area.
41	Will there be an entrance Glyncoch side and the main roadside?	Entrance arrangements will be looked at as the design develops.
42	How will children walking from top of Glyncoch be catered for (pupil question)? / will there be school buses for the bigger catchment area?	Transport is only provided where children live more than 1.5 miles from their catchment school (or nearest suitable school).
Community Use		
43	Will Sure start and Flying start be involved in the build? if yes, who will be responsible for the day to day running?	Flying Start will remain in its current location, however links with the school are key and can be further forged with the Headteacher and Flying Start management in relation to the new school.
44	If school facilities are being made available to the public who is responsible for this?	The governing body will decide on community use of the facilities and be responsible for the management of these arrangements. Risk assessments and booking agreements will need to be agreed

No.	Topic / Question	RCT Response
		between the governing body and any community organisations wishing to use facilities on the school site. This will create an opportunity for remuneration through facility hire fees.
45	Will there be any sort of wrap around childcare facility provided?	This is for the governing body to determine but a childcare facility will not be included within the design of the school.
Other		
46	If you are going to the expense of building a new school- on what is already a large site - why not build a swimming pool and leisure complex at the same time? It would benefit the community - plus it would save children having to spend so much time on buses going to swimming lessons!	The funding available is via Welsh Government's 21 st Century Schools and Colleges Programme which provides funding for new education provision only.
47	The school has really turned around recently, see recent Estyn report. We need to not lose sight of how the school has been turned around.	GD (Director of Education and Inclusion Services) has sat in on the progress meetings and commented that she was really pleased to see Estyn's recent report which is testament to the hard work of staff. The new school will allow the staff and school to go from strength to strength, creating an environment for children to thrive and build on progress to date.
48	When will staff be notified of processes such as the need to apply for roles in the new school?	Work will commence on developing the new staffing structure 18 months prior to the opening of the new school.
49	How involved will trade unions be in the change management process?	We have tried and tested processes in place that unions are aware of, such as appointment of new headteacher and development of staffing structure. During this process we will be able to advise the governing body but decisions rest with them.

No.	Topic / Question	RCT Response
		GD commented that the Local Authority does keep in regular contact with trade unions and keep them updated on our 21 st Century Schools Programme, so they are fully aware of developments.
50	Will building materials be of good quality and not of the type used in Grenfell Tower?	The construction industry globally has learned lessons and flammable cladding won't be used. We will engage with the fire service as part of the secured by design process to lend their expertise.

4. Closing remarks

SH informed the meeting that staff and governors will be offered the opportunity over the coming weeks to reflect on the responses provided by officers and submit additional questions where required.

AR encouraged engagement in the consultation process from staff, governors, parents/carers and the local community through completing the online survey or putting comments in writing to schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk.

GD thanked all attendees for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed.

Consultation to Amalgamate Cefn & Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools

Meeting with Cefn School Council

Wednesday 19th January 2022 @ 11.00am

via MS Teams

Present:

Gaynor Davies	GD	Director of Education & Inclusion Services
Andrea Richards	AR	Service Director - 21 st Century Schools & Transformation
Nicola Goodman	NG	21 st Century Schools - Lead for Strategic Planning & MIM
Catherine Williams	CW	21 st Century Schools - Project Officer
Richard Bowen	RB	21 st Century Schools - Project Officer
Sarah Nicholls	SN	21 st Century Schools - Graduate Officer
Mrs E Byers	EB	Cefn Primary School – Head of School
Mrs C Reynolds	CR	Cefn Primary School – Class Teacher
Pupil 1		Cefn Primary School – Member of School Council
Pupil 2		Cefn Primary School – Member of School Council
Pupil 3		Cefn Primary School – Member of School Council

5. Welcome & Introductions

GD welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. Introductions were made.

6. Consultation Overview

AR provided an explanation of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the consultation document. It was also confirmed that the pupils had all received a hard copy of the children's version of the consultation document.

7. Consultation Video

RB shared a video that had been prepared to explain the proposal and consultation process further. NG agreed to forward a copy of the video, along with some photographs of recently completed new primary schools, to Mrs Hagggett (Executive Headteacher) and asked that they be shared with all pupils.

8. Pupil Questions

Each year group at Cefn Primary School had prepared questions about the proposal in advance of the meeting. The three School Council members asked these questions on the pupils' behalf. The questions, and the responses provided by the RCT Officers, are summarised in the table below.

	Question	Response
1.	Will there be a new kitchen for the pupils to use as part of a cookery class/club?	There will be no kitchen for the children's use at the new school, however, the new facilities and curriculum will allow for some catering related activities by the pupils. It would be possible for someone from the Council's Catering Team to come to the new school and conduct 'healthy eating' classes with the pupils.
2.	Will there be a new school logo?	A new logo will be designed with input from the pupils – they could possibly hold a competition to design the new logo. Once the Council approves the logo, the Council's Design Team will professionally design a new school logo based on the input given from the pupils and teachers.
3.	What resources will there be on the yard?	The new school will be built on a flat site, which will allow for a secure Multi-Use Games Area (used for football, netball, tennis etc.). There will also be a grass pitch, a woodland area which can be used for 'forest schools' purposes, and possibly planter beds/gardening facilities for the pupils. The play areas will be colourful and exciting and will encourage outdoor learning. As this will be a community school, some of these facilities, for example the MUGA, can be available after school hours for people who don't attend the school (with the school's permission).
4.	Will there be a library in the new school?	The new school will include a 'Heart Space'. This is an area at the centre of the school which will include furniture such as seating, tables, ICT equipment, bookshelves. As the 'Heart Space' is a flexible area, it can be used for many different things, and can provide quiet areas for reading.

	Question	Response
		The 'Heart Space' will be designed as a modern and colourful area for all children in all year groups to enjoy.
5.	Will there be a lollipop man/woman at the new school?	A Traffic Impact Assessment will be conducted for the new school in Glyncoch. This Impact Assessment will explain what needs to be done to make sure pupils are safe when travelling to school. It is possible that a lollipop person may be needed, but it will depend on what the Road Safety team suggest as the most appropriate measures.
6.	Will the new school have a dining hall?	The new school will have a spacious hall which can be used for assemblies, PE lessons and there will be sufficient tables and chairs available for dining in the hall. The hall will be next to the kitchen so that it is easy for all pupils to have their meals in the open space of the hall.
7.	Will the pupils' timetables change after moving to the new school?	If the current timetables work for both the teachers and pupils, then this will be considered. However, the new school will include pupils from both Cefn and Craig yr Hesg primary schools, and so the timetables would need to reflect that and work for pupils from both schools. This will be decided by your teachers.
8.	In the new school, will there be room for children with difficulties?	All children will be welcome in the new school, and it will be designed so that it is inclusive and accessible for all. The new school will be designed to meet the additional needs of some pupils, and there will be two Learning Support Classes in the new school.
9.	Will the new school have an art room?	There will be no dedicated art room in the new building. Each classroom will have the necessary facilities, resources and technology for different types of activities and lessons, including art. There will also be enough storage in the

	Question	Response
		classrooms to keep the resources and artwork safe. The flexible 'Heart Space' can also be used for things such as art lessons.
10.	Will the pupils have new teachers, or will the same teachers be at the new school?	Bringing the two schools together will mean that there will need to be some little changes, but nothing too big. There will need to be at least the same number of teachers in the new building, and there is even the possibility that some new roles will be needed. The decisions on staff will be made later by the Temporary Governing Body.
11.	Will there be any sensory rooms at the new school?	The two Learning Support Classes currently at Cefn will move to the new school. Teachers will be able to give input as to what the children will need, so that the school will be inclusive to all pupils.
12.	Will the new school have new resources?	The school will have new furniture and ICT equipment. Curriculum materials (pens / books / toys etc.) can be moved across to the new building and continued to be used in the new school, if possible.
13.	What will happen to the resources that are not transferred to the new building?	It is important that any resources that are still in good condition are re-used somewhere else – nothing goes to waste if it can be used.
14.	Where will the children store their bags and coats?	Wherever possible, classrooms will be arranged in pairs, with shared toilets and cloakrooms directly off the classrooms, so that all the coats and bags can kept safe and tidy.
15.	Will there be any after-school clubs in the new school?	The new school will have a Multi-Use Games Area and other spaces that could be used after school and by the community in the evenings. Any after-school clubs that run will be a decision for your teachers.
16.	Can people use the facilities even if they don't attend the school?	Yes, there is a possibility that some of the school facilities could be used by the community, with permission from the school. It is important that any community use is managed safely.

9. Meeting Close

GD thanked the pupils and staff for their valuable contributions at today's meeting. She requested that all pupils and parents/carers be encouraged to respond to the consultation, whether their feedback is good or bad, by the closing date of 21st February 2022.

Consultation to Amalgamate Cefn & Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools

Meeting with Craig yr Hesg School Council

Wednesday 19th January 2022 @ 10.00am

via MS Teams

Present:

Gaynor Davies	GD	Director of Education & Inclusion Services
Andrea Richards	AR	Service Director - 21 st Century Schools & Transformation
Nicola Goodman	NG	21 st Century Schools - Lead for Strategic Planning & MIM
Catherine Williams	CW	21 st Century Schools - Project Officer
Richard Bowen	RB	21 st Century Schools - Project Officer
Sarah Nicholls	SN	21 st Century Schools - Graduate Officer
Miss C Thomas	CT	Craig yr Hesg Primary School – Head of School
Miss C Andrews	CA	Craig yr Hesg Primary School – Class Teacher
Pupil 1		Craig yr Hesg Primary School – Head Boy
Pupil 2		Craig yr Hesg Primary School – Head Girl
Pupil 3		Craig yr Hesg Primary School – Member of School Council

10. Welcome & Introductions

GD welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. Introductions were made.

11. Consultation Overview

AR provided the meeting with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the consultation document. It was also confirmed that the pupils had all received a hard copy of the children's version of the consultation document.

12. Consultation Video

RB shared a video that had been prepared to explain the proposal and consultation process further. NG agreed to forward a copy of the video, along with some photographs of recently completed new primary schools, to Mrs Haggett (Executive Headteacher) and asked that they be shared with all pupils.

13. Pupil Questions

All classes at Craig yr Hesg Primary School had prepared questions about the proposal in advance of the meeting. The three School Council members asked these questions on the pupils' behalf. The questions, and the responses provided by the RCT Officers, are summarised in the table below.

	Question	Response
1.	Will the nursery class have new toys?	We will have a set budget to buy new furniture and equipment for the new school. All of the furniture and ICT equipment will be new, and there may be some new toys and equipment. The school might also decide to use some of their funds to buy new things too.
2.	How big will the school be?	The school will be big enough for up to 360 pupils, plus a nursery class. The nursery and reception classes will be 70m ² , and the classrooms for the older children that have less toys and equipment in them will be 60m ² . All the classrooms will be spacious, bright and colourful spaces for you to learn in.
3.	Will there be two floors?	<p>This hasn't been decided yet. We will need to use machinery to explore what the land at the site is like for us to know how much of the land can be built on.</p> <p>If we can build a single storey school, all classrooms will have direct access to the outdoors. If we need to build a two-storey school, the younger children's classrooms will be on the ground floor, and the older children's classrooms will be on the upper floor.</p> <p>The new school will be accessible and inclusive. We will make sure that everyone can reach and use all areas and facilities in the school easily.</p>
4.	Will we have new teachers?	There are already lots of good teachers at Cefn and Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools, and we will need at least as many teachers in the new school. There could be some small changes and movements, but we don't think that there will be many big changes.
5.	Will we have a park in the yard?	There won't be a park, but there will be lots of exciting play and learning opportunities in the outdoor area. These will include a colourful Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) to play lots of different sports on, a grass pitch, and forest schools areas.
6.	How many classrooms will we have?	The school will have 12 classrooms, a nursery and two Learning Support Classes.

	Question	Response
		Not all of the classrooms will be needed when the school opens, but they will give the school room to grow if more pupils want to come to the new school.
7.	What colour will the uniform be?	This will be for the Governing Body to decide, who will discuss this with the Headteacher, staff and pupils. The new school will also need a new logo. Perhaps the school could run a competition for pupils to design this. The Council's Design Team could then produce a professional graphically design logo from your ideas.
8.	Will you make sure there are quiet reading areas, and maybe even a library?	Whilst there won't be a dedicated library, there will be a big open space in the middle of the school called a "Heart Space". This can be used for lots of different purposes. Furniture, which could include bookshelves, will be used in a clever way to create lots of different areas, including quiet areas which will be ideal for reading.
9.	How will the transition from Craig yr Hesg to the new school work, and will we be disrupted?	It will all be planned very carefully to ensure that any disruption is kept to an absolute minimum. We will use a removal company to move everything into the new school.
10.	Older pupils will have moved to high school by the time the new school is opened. Will they be able to use the facilities after school?	An important element of our new schools is that they are community schools. They will include a community room and outdoor facilities that older children and the wider community can use in the evenings. For example, in other community schools, the community facilities are used by Brownies, Scouts, choirs, sports teams and for Welsh evening classes. Community use will be agreed by and safely managed by the school.

14. Meeting Close

GD thanked the pupils and staff for their valuable contributions at today's meeting. She requested that all pupils and parents/carers be encouraged to respond to the consultation, whether their feedback is good or bad, by the closing date of 21st February 2022.

This page is intentionally left blank

Estyn's response to the proposal by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Council to amalgamate Cefn and Craig yr Hesg Primary schools to create a new community primary school on a new site

Introduction

This report has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales.

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultation documents to Estyn. However, Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and has produced the following response to the information provided by the proposer.

Summary/ Conclusion

It is likely that the proposals will maintain or improve the standard of education provision in the area by providing improved facilities for teaching and learning and helping the current federation's leadership to operate more effectively and efficiently.

Description and benefits

The proposer has given a clear rationale for the amalgamation of the federated primary schools based on the poor quality of the existing school buildings and the opportunities that a new amalgamated school would provide to improve teaching, learning and leadership.

The local authority has provided a detailed description of the proposal, including the timetable for statutory procedures and for implementing the proposal. However, it is not clear enough within the proposal exactly where the new school will be built. On page 1 of the consultation document, it states: 'The new school building will be built on the existing Craig yr Hesg Primary School site and the land adjacent to it (the former site of the Ty Gwyn Pupil Referral Unit).' However, on page 10 it states: 'Due to the limitations of the existing school sites, neither site is suitable to accommodate the new school in its current format. A new school is therefore required for Glyncoch which must be built on a new site.' On page 11 the document restates: 'Following this assessment, the existing Craig yr Hesg Primary School site and the land adjacent to it (the former site of the Ty Gwyn Pupil Referral Unit) was identified as the only suitable location for the new school.' The lack of clarity is around the extent to which the current site of Craig yr Hesg Primary School will be part of the new school location and what impact the building work will have on the current school during the construction phase.

The proposal sets out the expected benefits and disadvantages in a clear and fair way compared with the status quo. However, the only risk identified is that of parents choosing to send their children to an alternative school. There appear to be other risks which are not considered in the risk management section of the proposals. For example, the increase in traffic at the new school site is one such risk and the proposer states that a 'drop-off area' to help reduce this risk is only 'under consideration' and requires 'further surveys and transport and traffic assessments.' If the drop-off area isn't included in the final plans, there is likely to be a negative impact on traffic around the new school site at certain times of the day. An

additional risk could be the potential impact on Craig yr Hesg Primary School during the build phase, which is not discussed in the proposal.

The proposer has considered suitable alternatives and explained clearly why these are either not possible or less effective than the chosen proposal. The selected location for the new school on land adjacent to the Craig yr Hesg Primary School site is considered to be the 'only suitable location' within the area. The two federated schools are only 0.6 miles apart and, therefore, by locating to a site next to Craig yr Hesg Primary School, it is predicted that there will be little impact on travel arrangements for learners. The new school will be fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010, whereas both current schools do not meet the accessibility requirements, especially Cefn Primary School.

The information given in the proposals about surplus places is not clear enough. Pupil projection figures for 2025-2026 suggest that there will be a significant number of surplus places at Cefn Primary School (35%) and slightly too few places at Craig yr Hesg (-2%). This projection is given as one reason why a single new school would be better than the status quo. However, the new school is being planned to have a pupil admission number of 360 (excluding nursery places), even though the total number of pupils, according to the projections given, would be 245 in 2025-2026. This would give the new school an immediate surplus capacity of over 30%, yet anything over 30% is seen as a potential reason for considering reorganisation by the local authority. The reasons for building such surplus capacity into the new school are not made clear in the proposals.

Both of the federated schools offer English-medium education, and teacher Welsh as part of their curriculum. The new school will do the same, so there would appear to be limited impact on the local authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. There is a commitment that the amalgamated school will undertake the Cymraeg Campus' Language Charter, aimed at developing the use of Welsh in different contexts in school.

It is clear in the proposals that there will not be a large financial saving, because the two schools have been federated since 2012 and have already made savings as a result of this. It is estimated that approximately €78,000 could be saved annually based on the current school budgets. However, there would also be other financial benefits such as writing off the substantial maintenance backlog (estimated to be in excess of €750,000), the greater energy efficiency of the new school and potential future land sales.

Educational aspects of the proposal

The proposer has considered well the likely impact on the quality of standards in education of the proposals. In November 2021 the federated schools were removed from Significant Improvement following a monitoring visit by Estyn. This reflected improvements in the stability and effectiveness of leadership and in the quality of teaching across the federation. There are a number of examples within the proposal about how the facilities will provide new or extended opportunities for learning and well-being, such as enhanced ICT provision, creative outdoor play areas, a forest schools area, a habitat area and a multi-use games area. The new facilities are likely to help ensure delivery of the full curriculum at foundation phase and key stage 2, including the Curriculum for Wales.

The local authority considers the impact of the proposal on vulnerable groups suitably. This includes identifying that the Learning Supports Classes currently located at Cefn Primary School will be relocated at the new school in purpose-built accommodation, which is likely to help improve those pupils' experiences and learning opportunities.

The proposal is for a new community school with all-day access to parts of the new facility for community groups as well as after-school availability. At the same time, the site will be

better protected from anti-social behaviour than the current school sites by 'secured by design' fencing. These improvements are likely to increase its role in community cohesion.

If the school is sited near Craig yr Hesg there could be considerable disruption to the operation of the school. The proposal does not give sufficient consideration to the potential disruption to Craig yr Hesg Primary School during the construction phase and how this will be minimised.

This page is intentionally left blank



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21ST MARCH 2022

NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR ADOPTION AND FOSTERING SERVICES

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR LEYSHON

Author: Annabel Lloyd, Director of Children's Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update on the proposals for developing the governance and enabling for the National Adoption Service for Wales as it assumes responsibility for Foster Wales
- 1.2 To achieve agreement to signing the Joint Committee Agreement for the proposed Joint Committee

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Agree that the authority signs the Joint Committee Agreement for the National Adoption Service and Foster Wales; and
- 2.2 Subject to 2.1, authorises the Group Director, Community and Children's Services (in consultation with the Director of Legal Services) to agree any minor amendments to the Joint Committee Agreement which may arise as a result of the approval process being conducted across the 22 local authorities. Appendix 1.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Agreeing these proposals and signing the Joint Committee Agreement will put the Council's cooperation in these collaborative arrangements on a formal basis as well as clarifying roles and responsibilities for the

hosting of and delivery of national functions which support and enable local authority delivery of their adoption and fostering responsibilities.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The National Adoption Service has been in existence since 2014 and has enabled significant change and improvement in adoption services across Wales. Its structure and governance through national, regional and local arrangements were agreed by all councils at that time; a review in 2018 led to proposals to streamline governance and improve accountability. This included creating a Combined Governance Board (bringing together the Advisory Group and Governance Board required by the legislation) and a new Partnership Agreement to replace the original functional model have been already implemented.
- 4.2 Legal advice obtained by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) determined that in order for NAS to operate effectively on behalf of all 22 Welsh authorities, and for there to be a robust hosting arrangement with the host authority for the national and enabling functions (Cardiff), co-operation between Welsh local authorities needed to be put on a formal footing. The preference of the WLGA and the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru (ADDSC) was that this should be through a Joint Committee. Work on a National Joint Committee, to give proper effect to the co-operation and oversight from all 22 local authorities, has continued and is ready for implementation.
- 4.3 Since 2015, the National Adoption Service Director and central team has been supporting the work of the National Fostering Framework (NFF) to create a similar national, regional and local collaborative arrangement to improve Welsh fostering services albeit not through the creation of a national fostering service. Foster Wales has now emerged from the NFF and will support a defined range of fostering functions linked to recruitment and retention of local authority foster carers. Throughout this time, the WLGA and ADSS-C as lead bodies wanted the national functions for fostering to be linked to the National Adoption Service national functions to reduce duplication and costs as well as to maximise resilience, flexibility and longevity across both functions.
- 4.4 The proposed Joint Committee and the agreement underpinning it have been extended to include Foster Wales as has the capacity and functions for national co-ordination and enabling through a combined Central Team. The linking to the Joint Committee is critical for Foster Wales given the lack of a legislative basis for such co-operation for fostering services.

Governance - Establishment of a Joint Committee

- 4.5 The proposed governance structure is presented diagrammatically and with a narrative in Appendix 2. The national Joint Committee will, on behalf of the 22 Welsh Local Authorities, exercise their powers for the provision of the collaborative arrangements for the National Adoption Service for Wales (NAS) and for Foster Wales (FW). It will be comprised of Council Members meeting twice yearly.
- 4.6 WLGA lawyers have drafted a Joint Committee legal Agreement to be signed by all 22 local authorities; this is now ready to progress and is available alongside this report. This also contains a formal Scheme of Delegation and provision for the formal agreement with the host local authority for national functions.
- 4.7 The Joint Committee will provide the mechanism for all Welsh local authorities to discharge an executive and oversight role for NAS and FW. It will approve / receive:
- The Annual Report of NAS and of Foster Wales;
 - The annual programme of work for the NAS and for Foster Wales;
 - The budget for the office of the Director and national work for NAS and for FW; and
 - The agreement, and any changes to the agreement, for the host authority support of the office of the Director and national work for NAS and FW.
- 4.8 For the National Adoption Service only it will also oversee how the authorities work together to exercise their powers and comply with the National Assembly Directions.

Enabling - National infrastructure

- 4.9 A functional structure is proposed which, below the Director, has separate lead functions for adoption and fostering but a combined business and enabling function supporting both. The range of functions that will be carried out is described in Appendix 3 with a staffing structure of 9.5 f.t.e. staff (incl. Director.)
- 4.10 The core funding for the national functions for the National Adoption Service and Foster Wales is provided from a top slice of the Revenue Support Grant made available through the WLGA. This allocation, currently £473k per annum for adoption and £400k per annum for fostering, is subject to the agreement of the relevant WLGA committee periodically. Foster Wales has been awarded Welsh Government grant funding up to the end of March 2023 to fund specific purposes, this is

£573k for 2021/22 reducing by a small amount for 2022/23. Although Welsh Government investment is available to adoption this is fully utilised for direct service delivery through the regional structure. There are resources in both the Foster Wales WLGA allocation and the Foster Wales Welsh Government grant aid that part fund posts on a regional basis to directly support local authority activities.

- 4.11 The total cost of the proposed national structure is £586,384 for 2021/22 salary rates. Total available core budget across NAS and Foster Wales for 2021/22 is circa £1,449,000 albeit that over half the Foster Wales funding stream is subject to WG grant conditions for specific purposes as indicated above.
- 4.12 The structure is affordable up to the end of the Welsh Government Grant period (31.03.23) but there are pressures on staffing and operating budgets for both NAS and Foster Wales beyond that. The financial pressures have been flagged with Welsh Government, and work is commencing to consider how to resolve this beyond the current grant aid period. Resolving this will require the commitment of both Local Government and Welsh Government.
- 4.13 The proposals outlined are being progressed in order to formalise and consolidate the existing position of the Central Team in respect of the work it is currently doing for the National Adoption Service and for Foster Wales. This will allow both collaborative arrangements to continue to function and meet agreed plans and commitments in the short to medium term.

Engagement of stakeholders

- 4.14 Local authority members have been kept informed throughout via the WLGA, most recently, during September 2021 via the Cabinet Members (social care and health) Network and the WLGA Council.
- 4.15 The National Adoption Service Governance Board, the Foster Wales Lead Heads of Children's Services and Social Services Directors via ADSSC have agreed these proposals in principle.
- 4.16 The proposals have been informed by and developed with the full engagement of these key stakeholder groups.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

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

6 WELSH LANGUAGE

- 6.1 There are no Welsh language implications arising from this report.

7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 Consultation with stakeholders is noted in paragraphs 4.14 - 4.16 above

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 As outlined above, funding for the governance arrangements and central/national leadership and enabling, is provided from the WLGA via a top slice of the Rate Support Grant plus grant funding from the Welsh Government. There is no expectation that individual councils will incur additional costs in relation to these functions.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 Individual local authorities retain legal responsibility and accountability for the provision of adoption and fostering services. In respect of adoption services, the legal provisions outlined in paragraph 20 below require adoption responsibilities to be delivered in accordance with the arrangements for the National Adoption Service.
- 9.2 The legal basis underpinning the National Adoption Service is contained in section 3A of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 [which was inserted by the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014] and the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015. These set out in detail expectations on local authorities to co-operate at regional and national level to deliver and improve adoption services. They do not, however, contain provisions that explicitly create a mechanism that gives proper legal effect to the co-operation at national level or for the agreement with one local authority to host the national functions. The Joint Committee, and the Agreement that will accompany it, will put this on a formal legal footing as well as providing greater clarity and certainty for all authorities, the WLGA as well as the National Adoption Service and Foster Wales.
- 9.3 There are no regulations underpinning Foster Wales so the Joint Committee will provide the basis for the co-operation that is needed so it can operate as proposed.

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

10.1 The implementation of the proposed changes are designed to enhance the Council's commitment to looked after children, foster carers and adopters, and are all in line with the Council's Corporate Plan Vision of *'a County Borough that has high aspirations, is confident and promotes opportunity for all'*; as it will deliver against the specific priorities of *'People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone and Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work'*.

10.2 It will also help the Council to meet three of the seven wellbeing goals that The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' puts in place as follows:

- A more equal Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities

10.3 The proposed changes are also consistent with the sustainable approach promoted by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act through the five ways of working:

- Long-term – the proposals seek to make a long-term difference to people's lives, the way we work with families and the Council's resources.
- Prevention – the proposal is fundamentally focused upon preventing challenges from becoming worse and meeting need early and locally
- Integration – Partner organisations are involved in our adoption work
- Collaboration – This is the fundamental objective of the proposal
- Involvement – Relevant stakeholders have been consulted and involved.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 By agreeing to sign the Joint Agreement the Council formally endorses the revised governance and co-operations arrangements for the National Adoption Services as it formally assumes responsibility for Foster Wales.

Other Information:- Joint Committee Agreement

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Community and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21ST MARCH 2022

**NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR ADOPTION AND
FOSTERING SERVICES**

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S
SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO
HOLDER, COUNCILLOR LEYSHON**

Background papers

None

OFFICER TO CONTACT: Annabel Lloyd, Director of Children's Services

This page is intentionally left blank

DATED

2022

- (1) BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
 - (2) BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
 - (3) CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
 - (4) THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF CARDIFF
 - (5) CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
 - (6) CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL
 - (7) CONWY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
 - (8) DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
 - (9) FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
 - (10) GWYNEDD COUNTY COUNCIL
 - (11) ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL
 - (12) MERTHYR TYDFIL COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
 - (13) MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
 - (14) NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
 - (15) NEWPORT CITY COUNCIL
 - (16) PEMBROKESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
 - (17) POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL
 - (18) RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
 - (19) THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA
 - (20) TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
 - (21) VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL
 - (22) WREXHAM COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
- and
- (23) THE WELSH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

AGREEMENT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT COMMITTEE FOR THE
NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE

CONTENTS

1.	Interpretation	3
2.	Aims of Joint Discharge of Functions	8
3.	Establishment of a Joint Committee	10
4.	Establishment of Combined Governance Board and other Advisory Groups	11
5.	Arrangements for the Discharge of Functions	12
6.	Governance	13
7.	Appointment of Host Council	13
8.	Responsibilities of the Host Council	13
9.	Expenses of Joint Committee Members	14
10.	Monitoring Officer	14
11.	Reviews	15
12.	Audit	15
13.	Costs of Discharge of Functions	16
14.	Costs of the Joint Committee	17
15.	Liabilities Under This Agreement	17
16.	Duration of This Agreement	178
17.	Variation of this Agreement	18
18.	Withdrawal from the Joint Committee on Notice	18
19.	Termination of this Agreement for Cause	1819
20.	Termination of the Agreement by Agreement	19
21.	Termination – Consequential Matters	20
22.	Dispute Resolution	20
23.	Notices	201
24.	Information and Confidentiality	21
25.	Data Protection	212
26.	Freedom of Information	224
27.	Intellectual Property	2425

28.	Language	256
29.	Severability	266
30.	Relationship of Parties	26
31.	Third Party Rights	26
32.	Entire Agreement	26
33.	Law of Agreement or Jurisdiction	26
34.	Discretion of the Councils	26
	Schedule 1 Constitution of the Joint Committee	28
	Schedule 2 Terms of Reference of the Corporate Governance Board	31
	Schedule 3 Notice Provisions	314
	Schedule 4 Financial Memorandum	347
	Schedule 5 Specified Functions and Services	38
	Schedule 6 Terms of Reference for the Lead Head of Childrens Services Group	43
	Schedule 7 Functions Delegated to the Director of Operations	45

BETWEEN:

- (1) Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council of Municipal Offices, Civic Centre Ebbw Vale NP23 6XB ("Council")
- (2) Bridgend County Borough Council of Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend CF31 4WB ("Council")
- (3) Caerphilly County Borough Council of Ty Penallta, Tredomen Park, Ystrad Mynach Hengoed CF82 7PG ("Council")
- (4) The County Council of the City and County of Cardiff of County Hall, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff CF10 4UW ("Council")
- (5) Carmarthenshire County Council of County Hall, Carmarthen, Carmarthenshire SA31 1JP ("Council")
- (6) Ceredigion County Council of Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron, Ceredigion SA46 OPA ("Council")
- (7) Conwy County Borough Council of Bodlondeb, Bangor Road, Conwy LL32 8DU ("Council")
- (8) Denbighshire County Council of County Hall, Wynnstay Road, Ruthin LL15 1YN ("Council")
- (9) Flintshire County Council of County Hall, Mold CH7 6NB ("Council")
- (10) Gwynedd Council of Council Offices, Shirehall Street, Caernarfon LL55 1SH ("Council")
- (11) Isle of Anglesey County Council of Council Offices, Llangefni, LL77 7TW ("Council")
- (12) Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council of Civic Centre, Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8AN ("Council")
- (13) Monmouthshire County Council of PO Box 106, Caldicot NP26 9AN ("Council")
- (14) Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council of Port Talbot Civic Centre, Port Talbot SA13 1PJ ("Council")
- (15) Newport City Council of Civic Centre, Godfrey Road, Newport NP20 4UR ("Council")
- (16) Pembrokeshire County Council of County Hall, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire SA61 1TP ("Council")
- (17) Powys County Council of Powys County Hall, Spa Road East, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 5LG ("Council")
- (18) Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council of The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany CF40 2XX ("Council")

- (19) The Council of the City and County of Swansea of Civic Centre, Oystermouth Road, Swansea SA1 3SN ("Council")
- (20) Torfaen County Borough Council of the Civic Centre, Pontypool, Torfaen NP4 6YB ("Council")
- (21) Vale of Glamorgan Council of Civic Offices, Holton Road, Barry, Vale of Glamorgan CF63 4RU ("Council")
- (22) Wrexham County Borough Council of The Guildhall, Wrexham LL11 1AY ("Council")

(collectively referred to as "the Councils" for the purposes of this Agreement) and

- (23) Welsh Local Government Association of One Canal Parade, Dumballs Road, Cardiff CF10 5BF("WLGA"); and

WHEREAS:

- A The parties to this Agreement have agreed to enter into this Agreement in order to provide a framework for the Councils to give effect to the obligations and arrangements for the Specified Functions set out by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015 ("the Directions") made by the Welsh Ministers in exercise of their powers under section 3A of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and to document and regulate their respective rights and obligations to each other in that regard. The Agreement also provides a framework for the parties to give effect to the co-ordination of identified foster service functions across Wales.
- B The Councils have agreed to establish and to participate in a joint committee to facilitate the delivery of the Specified and Agreed Functions with a view to their economical, efficient and effective discharge.
- C This Agreement sets out the arrangements in relation to the manner in which the Councils will work together and use the Joint Committee to deliver the Specified and Agreed Functions.
- D The Councils have agreed that the Director of Operations shall be responsible for the day to day management of the delivery of the Specified and Agreed Functions.
- E The Councils have entered into this Agreement in reliance on the powers of Welsh local authorities under:
 - (i) sections 101, 102, 112 and 113 of the Local Government Act 1972 and sections 19 and 20 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the regulations made under these Acts to make arrangements to discharge functions jointly and to employ staff and place them at the disposal of other local authorities;
 - (ii) the powers in section 9 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to collaborate;
 - (iii) the incidental powers in section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, and

(iv) all other powers them so enabling.

F The Councils have each taken decisions compliant with the requirements of their respective constitutions to participate in the Joint Committee and enter into this Agreement.

G The Parties to the Agreement have agreed to comply with the requirements of this Agreement to enable the Director of Operations to fulfil their legal obligations.

IT IS AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

1. Interpretation

1.1 The following definitions and rules of interpretation apply in this Agreement:

Term here	Definition here
“Agreed Functions	the functions relating to fostering to be discharged by the Joint Committee pursuant to this Agreement being set out at Schedule 5 and any other functions which from time to time the Councils arrange for the Joint Committee or one or other of the Councils to discharge pursuant to the Powers
“Assets”	any tangible assets or property acquired, leased, licensed, loaned or purchased as required by the Host Council or another Council for the administration of this Agreement;
“Business Day”	any day other than a Saturday or Sunday or a public or bank holiday in Wales;
Combined Governance Board	the group established in accordance with clause 4 to comply with the requirements of the Directions;
“Commencement Date”	the date of this Agreement or such later date as the Councils, by resolution of each them, agree;
“Conflict of Interest Protocol”	The protocol agreed by the Combined Governance Board as required by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions

	2015 for identifying and avoiding conflicts of interests;
“Constitution of the Joint Committee”	the constitution set out at Schedule 1 to this Agreement;
“Council”	each of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Bridgend County Borough Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council, the County Council of the City and County of Cardiff, Carmarthenshire County Council, Ceredigion County Council, Conwy County Borough Council, Denbighshire County Council, Flintshire County Council, Gwynedd Council, Isle of Anglesey County Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Newport City Council, Pembrokeshire County Council, Powys County Council, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, City and County of Swansea Council, Torfaen County Borough Council, Vale of Glamorgan Council, Wrexham County Borough Council and “Councils” shall be construed accordingly;
Data Protection Legislation	all applicable data protection and privacy legislation in force from time to time in the UK including the UK GDPR; the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) (and regulations made thereunder) and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003 (SI 2003/2426) as amended;
“Director of Operations”	the person employed by the Host Council in compliance with the Directions with day to day responsibility for leadership, co-ordination of the service as a whole as well as delivery of national functions
“Directions”	The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015;

“Exempt Information”	any information or class of information relating to this Agreement which may fall within an exemption to disclosure under FOI Legislation;
“Financial Memorandum”	the approach to financial and accounting matters agreed by the Councils as set out at Schedule 4 to this Agreement;
“FOI Legislation”	the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and subordinate legislation made under this and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004;
Foster Wales	The collaborative endeavour agreed by local government to deliver and improve certain fostering functions through national and regional leadership and enabling.
“Governance Board”	the board which the Councils are required by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015 to establish to provide national oversight of regional collaboration on adoption services;. Since 2019 this function is managed through the Combined Governance Board
“Host” and “Host Council”	the Council appointed as Host Council in accordance with clause 7 of this Agreement;
“IP Material”	the Intellectual Property in the Material;
“Information Request	a request for information under FOI Legislation;
“Intellectual Property Rights”	patents, rights to inventions, copyright and related rights, trade-marks, trade names and domain names, rights in get-up, rights in goodwill or to sue for passing off, rights in designs, rights in computer software, database rights, rights in confidential information (including know-how and trade secrets) and any other intellectual property rights, in each case whether registered or unregistered and including all

applications (or rights to apply) for, and renewals or extensions of, such rights and all similar or equivalent rights or forms of protection which may now or in the future subsist in any part of the world;

“Joint Committee”

a committee of elected members from the Councils which will be responsible for ensuring and overseeing the delivery of the Specified and Agreed Functions in Accordance with the Directions and with a view to securing their more economical, efficient and effective discharge;

“Material”

all data, text, graphics, images and other materials or documents created, used or supplied by a Council in connection with this Agreement unless before the first use or supply the Council notifies the other Councils that the data or text supplied is not to be covered by this definition;

“National Adoption Service”

The adoption services and functions delivered collectively by the Joint Committee, the Regional Collaboratives, the Councils and partners;

“Personal Data”

Personal data as defined in the Data Protection Legislation;

“Powers”

The powers of Welsh local authorities under:

sections 101, 102, 112 and 113 of the Local Government Act 1972 and sections 19 and 20 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the regulations made under these Acts to make arrangements to discharge functions jointly and to employ staff and place them at the disposal of other local authorities;

the powers in section 9 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to collaborate;

	<p>the incidental powers in section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972,</p> <p>the powers in section 1 of the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 and section 25 of the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994 to provide services;</p> <p>all other powers them so enabling;</p>
“Proportionate Basis”	<p>in accordance with the relevant proportion for each Council by reference to their respective percentage contribution as set out in the Financial Memorandum</p>
“Regional Collaboratives”	<p>the groupings of the Councils as set out in Schedule to the Directions for the purpose of collaboration on adoption services;</p>
“Secondment Agreement”	<p>an agreement made between the Councils for the secondment of staff from one Council to the Host Council or another Council relating to arrangements for the discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions pursuant to this Agreement;</p>
“Section 151 Officer”	<p>the officer designated by a local authority as the person responsible for the proper administration of its financial affairs as required by section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972;</p>
“Hosting Agreement”	<p>an agreement made between the Councils pursuant to this Agreement relating to arrangements for the provision of specified support by the Host Council to assist the Joint Committee to discharge the Specified and Agreed Functions delegated to it pursuant to this Agreement;</p>
“Services”	<p>the Services to be provided on behalf of the Councils pursuant to the discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions being set out at Schedule 5</p>
“Specified Functions”	<p>the functions relating to adoption to be discharged by the Joint</p>

Committee pursuant to this Agreement being set out at Schedule 5 and any other functions which from time to time the Councils arrange for the Joint Committee or one or other of the Councils to discharge pursuant to the Powers;

“Staff Transfer Agreement”

an agreement made between the Councils for the transfer of staff from one Council to the Host Council or another Council relating to arrangements for the discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions pursuant to this Agreement;

- 1.2 References to any statute or statutory provision shall, unless the context otherwise requires, be construed in accordance with the Interpretation Act 1978.
- 1.3 The headings are inserted for convenience only and shall not affect the construction of this Agreement.
- 1.4 Words importing one gender include all other genders and words importing the singular include the plural and vice versa.
- 1.5 A reference in this Agreement to any clause, paragraph or schedule is, except where it is expressly stated to the contrary, a reference to a clause or paragraph of or schedule to this Agreement.
- 1.6 Any reference to this Agreement or to any other document unless otherwise specified shall include any variation, amendment or supplements to such document expressly permitted by this Agreement or otherwise agreed in writing between the relevant parties.
- 1.7 Words preceding “include”, “includes”, “including” and “included” shall be construed without limitation by the words which follow those words unless inconsistent with the context, and the rule of interpretation known as “eiusdem generis” shall not apply.
- 1.8 The schedules form part of this Agreement and will have the same force and effect as if expressly set out in the body of this Agreement and references to this Agreement includes the Schedules.
- 1.9 References to “the parties” shall be to the parties to this Agreement.

2. Aims of Joint Discharge of Functions

- 2.1 The aims of the joint discharge of the Specified Functions relating to adoption services under the provisions of this Agreement are:

- (a) The consistent delivery of high quality adoption services throughout Wales.

- (b) Keeping delay to a minimum in the placement of children for adoption.
- (c) Ensuring the widest choice possible of placements for adoption of children.
- (d) Ensuring that high quality and timely training and assessment for prospective adopters is consistently available.
- (e) Improving the process of matching children with prospective adopters.
- (f) The streamlining of adoption processes and improved liaison between social workers involved in adoption cases.
- (g) Keeping adoption breakdown to a minimum by the provision of adoption support services according to assessed need.
- (h) Collaborative working between local authorities, registered adoption societies, NHS local health boards and NHS Trusts and education services.

2.2 The aims of the joint discharge of the Agreed Functions relating to fostering are:

- (a) To support the strategic oversight of Foster Wales.
- (b) To consider the implications at local and regional level arising from the transition to Foster Wales.
- (c) To consider the development needs of services at local, regional, and national level.
- (d) To seek and support solutions to overcome barriers and challenges.
- (e) To continue to develop and maintain collaboration across local authority fostering.
- (f) To consider reports presented, agree actions, make decisions, and monitor progress.
- (g) To consider performance reports and monitor KPIs as identified and agreed.
- (h) To make recommendations for future areas of work programme development.

2.3 The Director of Operations and a central team of staff to support the Director of Operations are employed by the Host Council to fulfil a range of functions related to leadership, management and oversight of the National Adoption Service. The functions of the Director of Operations and central team include:

- (a) Providing leadership to set the direction for the National Adoption Service including strategic planning by agreeing priorities, targets and resourcing following engagement with partners and stakeholders as well as support to operational planning.

- (b) Reviewing progress including analysis of performance data and service information from the regions and Registered Adoption Agencies (otherwise known as Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAA's's).
- (c) Providing annual and mid-year reports each year for agreement by the Combined Governance Board, endorsed by the Joint Committee and submission to Welsh Ministers as well as to WLGA and the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru where required.
- (d) Providing specific functions nationally to support and enable National Adoption Service operations (currently as below).
- (e) Establishing and maintaining a website for the National Adoption Service for Wales.
- (f) Management of the Adoption Register for Wales (under contract from Welsh Government).
- (g) Commissioning and contracting national contracts to support service delivery functions and support.
- (h) Maintaining arrangements for service user engagement across Wales.
- (i) Leadership, matrix management oversight, advice and support to regions and VAA's.
- (j) Promotion of best practice and a culture of continuous improvement throughout the National Adoption Service.
- (j) Securing appropriate resourcing through new / additional finance or re-profiling of existing as well as managing the central team allocation, grants and investment.
- (k) Strategic commissioning as necessary for the discharge of functions.
- (l) Maintaining arrangements for national governance and allied sub / task & finish groups to engage stakeholders in carrying out the actions / work agreed by the Combined Governance Board.
- (m) Promotion of adoption, including national PR and marketing and the provision of the 'face and voice' of adoption in Wales.
- (n) Stakeholder and relationship management including with allied services and organisations in Wales and UK, Ministers and Welsh Government.
- (o) Strategic support and enabling functions, as agreed, for the National Fostering Framework / Foster Wales.

2.4 In addition Schedule 7 sets out a Scheme of Functions delegated to the Director of Operations to facilitate the achievement of the objectives of this Agreement.

3. Establishment of a Joint Committee

3.1 In exercise of their powers under sections 101(5) and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972, sections 19 and 20 of the Local Government Act

2000 and all other enabling powers the Councils hereby create a joint committee to be known as the National Adoption Joint Committee with effect from the Commencement Date.

- 3.2 The Joint Committee shall take decisions relating to the use of the National Adoption Service budget which shall be provided as a topslice from the Revenue Support Grant via the Welsh Local Government Association for the discharge of the Specified Functions, a similar topslice from the Revenue Support Grant via the Welsh Local Government Association for the discharge of the Agreed Functions, to meet the costs of the Host Council and the Joint Committee relating to this Agreement and shall have regard to reports and advice from the Combined Governance Board, Lead Heads of Children's Service's Meeting and Director of Operations.
- 3.3 The Joint Committee shall ensure the Scheme of Delegation set out in Schedule 7 is kept under review in accordance with paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of Schedule 7.
- 3.4 The Joint Committee shall operate and conduct its business in accordance with the terms of this Agreement including the Constitution set out at Schedule 1.
- 3.5 The Joint Committee shall review the terms of reference of the Joint Committee towards the end of each council term and shall make recommendations to the Councils and the WLGA for their consideration as to any amendments that the Joint Committee are required to discharge the Specified and Agreed Functions in accordance with the Directions.
- 3.6 This Agreement is without prejudice to each Council's other powers and responsibilities for its area.

4. Establishment of Combined Governance Board and other advisory groups

- 4.1 The Councils have established the Combined Governance Board. The Combined Governance Board shall act as an advisory group to the Joint Committee and shall discharge the role of the Governance Board and Advisory Group which the Councils are required by the Directions to establish for the purpose of providing national oversight of regional collaboration arrangements over adoption services.
- 4.2 The terms of reference of the Combined Governance Board shall be as set out in Schedule 2.
- 4.3 In respect of fostering services, the Councils have established the Lead Head of Children's Services Group as an advisory group to the Joint Committee. The Lead Head of Children's Services Group shall advise the Joint Committee on issues relating to Foster Wales. The terms of reference for the Lead Head of Children's Services Group shall be as set out in Schedule 6.
- 4.4 The Joint Committee may establish other advisory groups to advise the Joint Committee.

5. Arrangements for the Discharge of Functions

- 5.1 The Councils agree to use their Powers to enter into these arrangements under which the Joint Committee shall discharge on their behalf the Specified and Agreed Functions.
- 5.2 The Joint Committee shall discharge the Specified and Agreed Functions through the Host Council which shall, subject to and within the limitations and constraints of the resources allocated and paid to it pursuant to this Agreement, deliver the Services to support the delivery of the Specified and Agreed Functions. The Councils agree and acknowledge that the responsibility for discharging the Specified and Agreed Functions will none the less remain with the Joint Committee and notes the limitation of the Host Council's liability in that regard.
- 5.3 The Joint Committee may agree to bring additional functions and services within the scope of this Agreement but the Joint Committee may not agree to do so unless it has first received approval from all the Councils to discharge the additional functions and deliver the additional services. The provisions of this Agreement shall apply to any such additional functions and services.
- 5.4 The Councils here by agree the Financial Memorandum. The Councils shall have the discretion to agree variations to the Financial Memorandum at any time without varying the rest of this Agreement. For the avoidance of any doubt variation of the Financial Memorandum is subject to unanimous agreement of the Councils and is not a matter for decision by the Joint Committee.
- Each of the Councils shall contribute to the costs of the discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions pursuant to this Agreement in accordance with the terms of the body of this Agreement and the Financial Memorandum. Subject to the overarching terms set out in this Agreement, particulars of the arrangement may be further detailed, (including for example the mechanics of payment), in any Hosting Agreement, Secondment Agreement or Staff Transfer Agreement that may be entered into by the Councils.
- 5.5 The Councils intend to enter into a Hosting Agreement with the County Council of the City and County of Cardiff for the delivery of services (subject to all Councils being satisfied as to the terms and conditions proposed) pursuant to the discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions. The Councils may enter into further Hosting Agreements to record the detailed requirements of further individual arrangements made in connection with the discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions pursuant to this Agreement.
- 5.6 The Councils may also enter into a Secondment Agreement to record the arrangements for the secondment of staff for further individual arrangements made in connection with the discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions pursuant to this Agreement.
- 5.7 The Councils may also agree to enter into a Staff Transfer Agreement to record the arrangements for the transfer of staff for further individual

arrangements made in connection with the discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions pursuant to this Agreement.

6. Governance

- 6.1 The Councils each undertake to ensure that they make any changes to their own constitutions as are necessary to facilitate the operation of this Agreement. Each Council shall notify the other Councils and WLGA in writing within twenty-eight days of the date of this agreement either that it has made (or is in the process of making) the necessary changes to its constitution or that no changes are considered necessary.

7. Appointment of Host Council

- 7.1 Subject to the provisions of clauses 7.2 and 7.3 the Councils agree that the Council of the City and County of Cardiff should be the Host Council for the purposes of this Agreement.
- 7.2 The Council of the City and County of Cardiff and any other Council which is appointed as Host Council may terminate its appointment as Host Council by giving not less than twelve months' written notice or such other period of notice as is agreed by all the Councils to the other Councils of its intention to terminate its appointment. Such twelve months' written notice shall end at the end of a financial year.
- 7.3 The Joint Committee may terminate the appointment of City and County of Cardiff Council or any other Council as the Host Council by giving at not less than twelve months' written notice or such other period of notice as is agreed by all the Councils to the Host Council of the Joint Committee's intention to terminate the appointment of the Host Council. Such twelve months' written notice shall end at the end of a financial year.
- 7.4 If the appointment of a Council as the Host Council is terminated in accordance with clause 7.2 or clause 7.3 the Joint Committee may appoint one of the Councils as Host Council such appointment to be effective from the commencement of the financial year following the expiry of notice of termination under clause 7.2 or 7.3.
- 7.5 If the appointment of a Council as the Host Council is terminated in accordance with clause 7.2 or clause 7.3 any outstanding payment due to that Council from the Joint Committee for costs incurred in the role of the Host Council and any costs it incurs upon or as a consequence of Termination shall be paid in accordance with the terms of this Agreement, including the Financial Memorandum.
- 7.6 Any dispute over the appointment or the termination of the appointment of a Council as the Host Council shall be dealt with in accordance with the dispute resolution procedure in clause 23 of this Agreement.

8. Responsibilities of the Host Council

- 8.1 (i) Subject to and within the limitations of the funding allocated and received by the Host Council, the Host Council shall provide Assets, staff and other resources as are necessary to discharge the Specified and Agreed Functions pursuant to this Agreement.

(ii) Subject to the overarching terms and principles set out in in this Agreement, in particular clause 13, the detailed provisions as to the payment of the costs of the Host Council in providing such Assets, staff and other resources shall be in accordance with a Hosting Agreement between the Councils, and the Host Council and shall be facilitated by the Welsh Local Government Association. Any such Hosting Agreement must be in a form to the satisfaction of the Host Council.

8.2 The Host Council shall employ the Director of Operations and the staff required for undertaking the national functions.

8.3 The Host Council has agreed and arranged for the Director of Operations to have the day-to-day responsibility for the management and delivery of the Services.

8.4 In carrying out its role the Host Council shall have regard to :

- (a) all applicable Laws and Regulations.
- (b) best practice.
- (c) the aims, principles and objectives of this Agreement and any applicable policies agreed by the Councils.
- (d) any relevant guidance issued or specified by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales and any other relevant regulator.
- (e) the Councils duties under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

And shall facilitate the proper discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions of the Councils and discretionary provision of in-scope elements of the Services.

8.4.2 The Host Council shall ensure that its health and safety policy statements together with related policies and procedures are made available to the Joint Committee on request.

8.4.3 The Host Council shall comply with any investigation by any statutory ombudsman or tribunal relating to the discharge of the Specified or Agreed Functions.

9. Expenses of Joint Committee Members

9.1 Each Council shall be responsible for meeting any expenses to which any Joint Committee Member or officer appointed by it as its representative is entitled as a result of their attendance at duly authorised meetings.

10. Monitoring Officer

10.1 The Councils agree that at the date of the Agreement the Monitoring Officer of Cardiff Council shall act as Monitoring Officer for the Joint Committee. The appointment of Cardiff Council's Monitoring Officer as Monitoring Officer to the Joint Committee shall cease at the earlier of (i) such date as Cardiff Council ceases to act as Host Council or (ii) the Councils unanimously decide to appoint the Monitoring Officer of a different Council as Monitoring Officer to the Joint Committee pursuant to clause 10.2.

- 10.2 The Councils may decide that the Monitoring Officer of a different Council shall be designated as Monitoring Officer for the Joint Committee. This shall require a unanimous decision from the Councils. Following such a decision the Host Council shall notify the officer who is currently acting as Monitoring Officer and the officer who has been designated as Monitoring Officer for the future.
- 10.3 The Councils acknowledge and agree that the Monitoring Officer will need to be provided with such resources as the Monitoring Officer considers sufficient to allow her to perform her duties and that this will be a cost of the Joint Committee.
- 10.4 For such time as the Host Council and the Monitoring Officer to the Joint Committee is being performed by the same Council then the Monitoring Officer's cost will be added to the Host Council's costs and the provisions of clause 13 of this Agreement shall apply.

11. Reviews

- 11.1 The Joint Committee shall review the discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions at least annually alongside the Combined Governance Board reviewing service progress and performance quarterly and reporting to the Joint Committee on the results of its review.
- 11.2 The Director of Operations shall submit a quarterly report to the Combined Governance Board and an annual report to the Joint Committee, setting out details of:
- (a) The performance of the Specified and Agreed Functions.
 - (b) Income and expenditure and compliance with the Financial Memorandum.
- 11.3 The Councils and the Regional Collaboratives shall carry out a review of their discharge of the regional Specified Functions for adoption and provide the following to the Director of Operations
- (a) An annual work programme by 31 March each year
 - (b) Quarterly performance reporting
 - (c) An annual report by 31 May each containing the items detailed in the Directions.
- 11.4 The Director of Operations will use this information as the basis for reporting to the Joint Committee for adoption services.

12. Audit

- 12.1 The discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions on behalf of the Councils and the finances relating to the discharge of the Specified or Agreed Functions shall be subject to an annual external audit by the central team of the National Adoption Service which shall be commissioned by the Host Council in accordance with the Host Council's audit processes.

13. Costs of Discharge of Functions

- 13.1 The Host Council agrees that any of the Services it provides for the discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions shall be on a cost recovery basis. For the avoidance of any doubt such costs shall be deemed to include all costs incurred howsoever arising, including , without limitation to the generality of the foregoing;
- (i) costs of any additional employees required in order to carry out the Host Council role/provide capacity to carry out such role and all associated recruitment costs,
 - (ii) all employee related costs including on costs,pension strain, termination costs and any employee related claims,
 - (iii) fees and charges incurred (including external fees or charges for any third party services, goods or works procured) and
 - (iv) expenses, legal costs, claims, damages, insurance premiums and the like that the Host Council reasonably incurs in carrying out its role.
- 13.2 The Councils shall each year apply the central National Adoption Services budget to fund the payment of the costs of the Host Council. Any shortfall in such funding shall be paid by the Councils within 30 days of demand by the Host Council and as follows. Each Council's contribution shall be calculated by reference to their respective percentage contribution as set out in the Financial Memorandum.
- 13.3 To aid transparency and accountability the Host Council shall:
- (i) Provide the Joint committee, at its first meeting, with a report outlining its estimated costs for acting as Host Council for the financial year 2022/2023. For the avoidance of any doubt the estimated costs submitted will be for noting purposes only and the Council's will be obliged to meet the Hosts Council's actual costs as set out in this Agreement.
 - (iii) For each subsequent financial year ('Subsequent Financial Year') the Host Council shall, prior to the Subsequent Financial Year in question, present to the Joint committee a report as to its estimate costs for acting as Host Council for the Subsequent Financial Year.
 - (iii) If, in any year, the Joint Committee does not find acceptable the estimated costs for the Subsequent Financial year then the Joint Committee may terminate the appointment of the then Host Council and the provision of clause 7.3 shall be deemed to apply save that the termination date of the appointment of the then Host Council shall be the 31st March, in the financial year proceeding the Subsequent Financial Year or such latter date as all the Councils may agree.
 - (iv) As part of its financial reporting to the Joint Committee the Host Council shall from time to time present to the Joint Committee reports of the actual costs incurred in carrying out the Host Council role.
- 13.4 The Host Council in determining the level of resources it requires to carry out its role under the Agreement shall (i) act responsibly and prudently (ii) use its reasonable endeavours to put in place and maintain in place sufficient assets staff and other resource to undertake its role and (iii) wherever reasonably practicable report to the Joint Committee and/or Director of Operations for information if in any financial year its costs are likely to materially exceed the estimated costs that have previously been submitted to the Joint Committee.

14. Costs of the Joint Committee

14. The Councils shall apply the central National Adoption Services budget to fund any costs of the Joint Committee, including the Host Councils costs. Any shortfall in such funding shall be paid by the Councils. Each Council's contribution shall be calculated by reference to their respective percentage contribution as set out in the Financial Memorandum. The Welsh Local Government Association shall be responsible for the administration of the payment of costs involved in the administration of the Joint Committee.

15. Liabilities Under This Agreement

15.1 The Host Council shall indemnify and keep indemnified each of the other Councils to this Agreement against any losses, claims, expenses, actions, demands, costs and liability suffered by that Council to the extent arising from any wilful default or wilful breach by the Host Council of its obligations under this Agreement or its statutory duties (and "wilful" in this context shall, for the avoidance of doubt, not include matters which are outside the reasonable control of the Host Council or matters arising from any negligent act or omission in relation to such obligations).

15.2 No claim shall be made against the Host Council by the other Councils or any of them to recover any loss or damage which may be incurred by reason of or arising out of the carrying out by the Host Council of its obligations under this Agreement unless and to the extent such loss or damage arises from a wilful default or wilful breach by the Host Council under clause 15.1.

15.3 Each of the other Councils (acting severally) shall indemnify and keep indemnified the Host Council against all losses, claims, expenses, actions, demands, costs and liabilities which the Host Council may incur by reason of or arising out of the carrying out by the Host Council of its obligations under this Agreement for that Council or arising from any wilful default or wilful breach by a Council of its obligations under this Agreement (and wilful in this context shall, for the avoidance of doubt, not include matters which are outside the reasonable control of that Council or matters arising from any negligent act or omission in relation to such obligations) unless and to the extent that the same result from any wilful breach by the Host Council of any such obligations.

15.4 The amount to be paid to the Host Council by any of the other Councils under clause 15.3 shall be borne by each of the Councils to the extent of its responsibility, however in the event that the responsibility is a shared one between the Councils (so that it is not reasonably practicable to ascertain the exact responsibility between the Councils) then the amount to be paid shall be divided between the Councils on a Proportionate Basis.

15.5 In the event of a claim under this clause 15 in which it is not reasonably practicable to determine the extent of responsibility as between the Councils then the amount shall be divided amongst the Councils on a Proportionate Basis.

15.6 A Council which receives a claim for losses, expenses, actions, demands, costs and liabilities related to the discharge of the Specified and Agreed

Functions shall notify and provide details of such claim as soon as is reasonably practicable to the other Councils.

- 15.7 Failure to give notice in accordance with clause 15.6 shall not relieve a party of its obligations to indemnify another under this clause 15.
- 15.8 Each Council shall not be obliged to indemnify the other Councils to the extent that the insurances maintained by the other Councils at the relevant time provide an indemnity against the loss giving rise to a claim and to the extent that another Council recovers under a policy of insurance save that the Council responsible for liabilities suffered by another Council shall be responsible for (i) the deductible under any such policy of insurance (ii) any amount over the maximum amount insured under such policy of insurance and (iii) any resultant increase in future year premiums (for a maximum of 10 years) incurred by the Council who claims on its insurance.
- 15.9 The indemnities given under this Agreement are in addition to any Hosting Agreement between the Host Council and any of the other Councils.

16. Duration of this Agreement

- 16.1 This Agreement shall come into force on the Commencement Date and shall continue from year to year or until terminated in accordance with the provisions of this Agreement.

17. Variation of This Agreement

- 17.1 Any of the Councils may request a variation to this Agreement by making such a written request to the officer acting as Monitoring Officer to the Joint Committee.
- 17.2 The officer acting as Monitoring Officer to the Joint Committee shall circulate the request to each of the Councils within ten Business Days of receipt of the request for consideration and approval by the Councils.
- 17.3 If each of the Councils approve such variation, then the officer acting as Monitoring Officer to the Joint Committee shall arrange for the preparation of an appropriate Deed of Variation to this Agreement to be prepared for execution by the Councils and such change shall only take effect upon completion of that Deed and the costs associated with the preparation of such Deed of Variation shall be shared equally between the Councils. Such Deed of Variation may be executed in parts by each Council that is then a party to this Agreement.
- 17.4 If one of the Councils does not approve such variation, then the variation to this Agreement shall not occur.

18. Withdrawal from the Joint Committee on Notice

- 18.1 Any Council may withdraw from the Joint Committee in accordance with the following procedure:
- 18.2 Any Council which wishes to withdraw from the Joint Committee shall give not less than twelve months' written notice terminating at the end of a financial year to the other Councils and the officer acting as Monitoring

Officer to the Joint Committee shall consult the other Councils giving due consideration to:

- (a) Any loss of funding arising from such withdrawal and including any non-payment, clawback or repayment of such funding;
- (b) Any other loss, liability, damage, claim or expense,

which would be incurred by the Councils upon which notice has been served by reason of such withdrawal from the Joint Committee.

18.3 Any Council wishing to withdraw from the Joint Committee undertakes as a condition of such withdrawal to make, prior to withdrawal such reasonable payment or payments which fairly reflect the actual losses caused by or anticipated as a result of the withdrawal as shall be determined by the other Councils pursuant to clauses above and no notice under this clause 18 shall take effect unless and until such payment has been agreed or referred to the Dispute Resolution procedure under Clause 22.

18.4 Subject to the provisions of clause 15 or unless agreed otherwise by the parties, each Council reserves the right to recover from any party to this Agreement the costs of any claims, costs, expenses, losses or liabilities of any nature or which have been caused by any act or omission of that party and which are discovered after the party's withdrawal from this Agreement.

18.5 Any Council that withdraws from the Joint Committee shall be responsible for ensuring that it is able to comply with its legal obligations in respect of the discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions. Any Council that withdraws from the Joint Committee shall include in its notice to the other Councils confirmation that it shall comply with its legal obligations in respect of the discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions

19. Termination of this Agreement for Cause

19.1 Without prejudice to any other rights or remedies, this Agreement may be terminated in relation to any other Council ("Defaulter") by the other Councils ("Non-Defaulting Councils") acting unanimously in giving sixty-five Business Days written notice to the Defaulter where the Defaulter materially breaches any of the provisions of this Agreement or in the case of a breach capable of remedy fails to remedy the same within thirty Business Days (or such other period as agreed by the Non-Defaulting Councils) of being notified of each breach in writing by the Non-Defaulting Councils and being required to remedy the same.

19.2 If this Agreement is terminated each Council shall be responsible for ensuring that it is able to comply with its legal obligations in respect of the discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions.

20. Termination of the Agreement by Agreement

20.1 The Councils agree that this Agreement may be determined upon terms agreed by all the Councils.

20.2 Upon termination of this Agreement the parties agree that the Joint Committee shall cease to exist and any arrangement for the discharge of

Specified and Agreed Functions which has been made pursuant to this Agreement shall cease on the expiry of the notice period specified in the relevant Hosting Agreement and the Specified and Agreed Functions shall be returned to the Councils which were responsible for them prior to this Agreement.

- 20.3 If this Agreement is terminated each Council shall be responsible for ensuring that it is able to comply with its legal obligations in respect of the discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions.

21. Termination – Consequential Matters

- 21.1 In the event of termination of this Agreement under Clause 20 as the case may be, any party shall supply to any other party when requested any information which the other party requires for the continuing discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions; and
- 21.2 Any Intellectual Property Rights created under this Agreement shall be owned by the then parties in equal proportions; and
- 21.3 Each of the parties shall undertake to make such reasonable payment or payments which fairly reflect the obligations of that Council pursuant to this Agreement.
- 21.4 In the event of termination of this Agreement all Assets held by any of the Councils for the purposes of this Agreement shall be dealt with in accordance with the Financial Memorandum.
- 21.5 The Host Council shall: -
21.5.1 be reimbursed by the Councils for all costs it incurs upon or as a consequence of Termination with each Council's contribution to such costs being calculated by reference to their respective percentage contribution as set out in the Financial Memorandum and
21.5.2. transfer any relevant information it holds to the Council to which the relevant information relates.
- 21.6 It shall be the duty of the Councils to try to minimise any losses arising from the termination of this Agreement.
- 21.7 Each Council is responsible for its own compliance with the Directions and any other relevant law that applies to the Specified and Agreed Functions and shall take any action necessary to ensure that it is able to comply with its legal obligations following termination of this Agreement.

22. Dispute Resolution

- 22.1 The Councils undertake and agree to pursue a positive approach towards dispute resolution which seeks in the context of this joint working arrangement to identify a solution at the lowest operational level that is appropriate to the subject of the dispute, and which avoids legal proceedings and maintains a strong working relationship between the parties.
- 22.2 Any dispute arising in relation to any aspect of this Agreement shall be resolved in accordance with this clause 22.

- 22.3 All disputes, claims or differences between the Councils arising out of or in connection with this Agreement or its subject matter or formation, including any question regarding its existence, validity or termination, (a "Dispute") shall be referred to the Director of Operations who shall produce and implement a plan for resolving the dispute.
- 22.4 If the plan of the Director of Operations does not resolve the dispute it may at the written request of any Council involved in the dispute, be referred by each Council to its chief executive.
- 22.4 If the Councils' chief executives do not agree a resolution of the Dispute within one month of the date of service of any such request, the Councils may agree a process to attempt to settle the Dispute by mediation or arbitration.

23. Notices

Form of Notice

- 23.1 Any demand, notice or other communication given in connection with or required by this Agreement shall be made in writing and shall be delivered to or sent by pre-paid first class post to the recipient at the address stated in Schedule 3 (or such other address as may be notified in writing from time to time) or sent by facsimile transmission to the recipient to the facsimile number stated in Schedule 3 or sent electronically to the e-mail address stated in Schedule 3.

Service

- 23.2 Any such demand, notice or communication shall be deemed to have been duly served:
- (a) If delivered by hand, when left at the proper address for service.
 - (b) If given or made by pre-paid first-class post two Business Days after being posted;
 - (c) If sent by facsimile at the time of transmission provided that a confirmatory copy is on the same day that the facsimile is transmitted sent by pre-paid first class post in the manner provided for in clause 23.1 Provided That in each case that if the time of such deemed service is either after 4.00pm on a Business Day or on a day other than a Business Day service shall be deemed to occur at 10.00am on the next following Business Day; or
 - (d) If sent by e-mail, when it has been sent to the e-mail address stated in Schedule 4 and receipt of such e-mail has been acknowledged.

24. Information and Confidentiality

- 24.1 Without prejudice to clauses 25 and 26 the parties shall keep confidential all matters relating to this Agreement or the Intellectual Property Rights of the parties and shall use all reasonable endeavours to prevent their employees and agents from making any disclosure to any person of any matter relating to the Agreement or Intellectual Property Rights of the parties.

24.2 Clause 24.1 shall not apply to:

- (a) Any disclosure of information that is reasonably required by persons engaged in the performance of their obligations under this Agreement.
- (b) Any matter which a party can demonstrate is already generally available and in the public domain otherwise than as a result of a breach of this clause.
- (c) Any disclosure which is required by any law (including any order or a court of competent jurisdiction) any Parliamentary obligation or the rules of any stock exchange or governmental or regulatory authority having the force of law.
- (d) Any disclosure of information which is already lawfully in the possession of the disclosing party prior to its disclosure by the disclosing party.
- (e) Any disclosure which is required or recommended by the rules of any governmental or regulatory authority including any guidance from time to time as to openness and disclosure of information by public bodies.
- (f) Any disclosure which is necessary to be disclosed to provide relevant information to any insurance broker in connection with obtaining any insurance required by this Agreement.
- (g) Any disclosure by a party to a department, office or agency of the Government.
- (h) Any disclosure for the purpose of the examination and certification of a party's accounts.

Where disclosure is permitted under clauses 24.2(a), 24.2(f), 24.2(g), or 24.2(h) the recipient of the information shall be placed under the same obligation of confidentiality as that contained in this Agreement by the disclosing Council.

25. Data Protection

25.1 In relation to the subject matter of this agreement each party undertakes at all times to comply with the Data Protection Legislation. This clause 25 is in addition to and does not relieve remove or replace a party's obligations under the Data Protection Legislation.

25.2 Each Council:

- (a) Shall process Personal Data belonging to any other Council only on the instructions of that Council (subject to compliance with applicable law);
- (b) Shall only undertake processing of Personal Data reasonably required in connection with this Agreement.
- (c) Shall ensure that it has in place appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect against unauthorised or unlawful processing of Personal Data and against accidental loss or destruction

of or damage to Personal Data appropriate to the harm that might result from the unauthorised or unlawful processing or accidental loss destruction or damage and the nature of the data to be protected having regard to the state of technological development and the cost of implementing any measures (those measures may include where appropriate pseudonymising and encrypting Personal Data ensuring confidentiality integrity availability and resilience of its systems and services ensuring (subject to the terms of any third party arrangements that may be in place) that availability of and access to Personal Data can be restored in a timely manner after an incident and regularly assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of the technical and organisational measures adopted by it);

- (d) Shall ensure that all personnel who have access to and/or process Personal Data are obliged to keep the Personal Data confidential.
- (e) Shall not transfer any Personal Data outside of the European Economic Area unless the prior written consent of the other Councils has been obtained and the following conditions are fulfilled.
 - (i) The Council transferring the Personal Data has provided appropriate safeguards in relation to the transfer.
 - (ii) The data subject has enforceable rights and effective legal remedies.
 - (iii) The Council transferring the Personal Data complies with its obligations under the Data Protection Legislation by providing an adequate level of protection to any Personal Data that is transferred
- (f) Shall assist the other Councils in responding to any request from a data subject and in ensuring compliance with their obligations under the Data Protection Legislation with respect to security breach notifications impact assessments and consultations with supervisory bodies.
- (g) Shall use its reasonable endeavours to procure that all relevant sub-contractors and third parties comply with this clause 25.

25.3 The Councils shall not disclose Personal Data to any third parties other than:

- (a) To employees and sub-contractors and third parties to whom such disclosure is reasonably necessary in order for the Councils to discharge the Councils' obligations in relation to this Agreement; or
- (b) To the extent required under a court order or to comply with any applicable laws

provided that any disclosure to any sub-contractor or any third parties under clause 25.3 shall be made subject to written terms substantially the same as, and no less stringent than, the terms contained in this clause 25 and that the Councils shall give notice in writing to all other Councils of any disclosure of Personal Data belonging to them which they or a sub-contractor or third parties are required to make under clause 25 immediately they are aware of such a requirement.

- 25.4 Any Council may, at reasonable intervals, request a written description of the technical and organisational methods employed by any other Council and the relevant sub-contractors. Within five Business Days of such a request, the Council requested to do so shall supply written particulars of all such measures as it is maintaining detailed to a reasonable level such that the requesting Council can determine whether or not, in connection with the Personal Data, it is compliant with the Data Protection Legislation. Each Council shall use its reasonable endeavours to ensure that the sub-contractors and any third parties also comply with such request from any other Council.
- 25.5 All Councils shall ensure that any Personal Data they obtain and provide to any other Council has been lawfully obtained and complies with the Data Protection Legislation and that the use thereof in accordance with this Agreement shall not breach any of the provisions of the Data Protection Legislation.
- 25.6 Each Council shall provide the other Councils as soon as reasonably practicable, with such information in relation to Personal Data and their processing as the other Councils may reasonably request in writing and the party asked to provide the relevant data may reasonably be able to provide in order for the other Council to comply with its obligations under this clause and the Data Protection Legislation.
- 25.7 Each Council shall take reasonable precautions (having regard to the nature of their respective obligations under this Agreement) to preserve the integrity of any Personal Data.
- 25.8 The Councils shall continually review any existing information sharing protocols being used in relation to this Agreement to ensure they remain relevant and to identify which Personal Data needs to be processed and on what basis to ensure compliance with this clause 25.
- 25.9 Each Council shall maintain complete and accurate records to demonstrate its compliance with this clause 25.

26. Freedom of Information

- 26.1 The parties recognise that the Councils are public authorities as defined by FOI Legislation and therefore recognise that information relating to this Agreement may be the subject of an Information Request.
- 26.2 The Councils shall assist each other in complying with their obligations under FOI Legislation, including but not limited to assistance without charge in gathering information to respond to an Information Request.
- 26.3 Any Council shall be entitled to disclose any information relating to this Agreement and the Specified and Agreed Functions in response to an Information Request save that in respect of any Information Request which is in whole or part a request for Exempt Information.
- 26.4 The Council which receives the Information Request shall circulate the Information Request and shall discuss it with the other Councils and the Director of Operations.

- 26.5 The Council which receives the Information Request shall in good faith consider any representations raised by other Councils when deciding whether to disclose Exempt Information and
- 26.6 The Council which receives the Information Request shall not disclose any Exempt Information beyond the disclosure required by FOI Legislation without the consent of the Council or Councils to which it relates.
- 26.7 The parties to this Agreement acknowledge and agree that any decision made by a Council which receives an Information Request as to whether to disclose information relating to this Agreement pursuant to FOI Legislation is solely the decision of that Council. A Council will not be liable to any party to this Agreement for any loss, damage, harm or detrimental effect arising from or in connection with the disclosure of information in response to an Information Request.

27. Intellectual Property

- 27.1 Each Council will retain all Intellectual Property in its Material.
- 27.2 Each Council will grant all of the other Councils a non-exclusive, perpetual, non-transferable and royalty free licence to use, modify, amend and develop its IP Material for the discharge of the Councils' obligations in relation to this Agreement whether or not the Council granting the licence remains a party to this Agreement.
- 27.3 Without prejudice to clause 27.1, if more than one Council owns or has a legal or beneficial right or interest in any aspect of the IP Material for any reason (including without limitation that no one Council can demonstrate that it independently supplied or created the relevant IP Material without the help of one or more of the other Councils), each of the Councils who contributed to the relevant IP Material will grant to all other Councils to this Agreement a non-exclusive, perpetual, non-transferable and royalty free licence to use and exploit such IP Material as if all the other Councils were the sole owner under the Copyright Design and Patents Act 1988 or any other relevant statute or rule of law.
- 27.4 Any entity or person who is at the date of this Agreement a party to this Agreement and who has licensed any Intellectual Property under this Agreement shall have a non-exclusive, perpetual right to continue to use the licensed Intellectual Property.
- 27.5 Each Council warrants that it has or will have the necessary rights to grant the licences set out in clause 27.2 and 27.3 in respect of the IP Material to be licensed.
- 27.6 Each Council agrees to execute such further documents and take such actions or do such things as may be reasonably requested by any other Councils (and at the expense of the Council or Councils making the request) to give full effect to the terms of this Agreement.

28. Language

- 28.1 The Joint Committee shall arrange for the Specified and Agreed Functions to be discharged in such a way that each of the Councils comply with their duties under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

29. Severability

- 29.1 If at any time any clause or part of a clause or schedule or appendix or part of a schedule or appendix to this Agreement is found by any court, tribunal or administrative body of competent jurisdiction to be wholly or partly illegal, invalid or unenforceable in any respect:

- (a) That shall not affect or impair the legality, validity or enforceability of any other provision of this Agreement.
- (b) The parties shall in good faith amend this Agreement to reflect as nearly as possible the spirit and intention behind that illegal, invalid or unenforceable provision to the extent that such spirit and intention is consistent with the laws of that jurisdiction and so that the amended Agreement complies with the laws of that jurisdiction.

30. Relationship of Parties

- 30.1 Each of the parties is an independent organisation and nothing contained in this Agreement shall be construed to imply that there is any relationship between the parties of partnership or principal/agent or of employer/employee. No party shall have any right or authority to act on behalf of another party nor to bind another party by contract or otherwise except to the extent expressly permitted by the terms of this Agreement.

31. Third Party Rights

- 31.1 The parties to this Agreement do not intend that any of its terms will be enforceable by virtue of the Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999 by any person not a party to it.

32. Entire Agreement

- 32.1 This Agreement and all documents referred to in this Agreement set forth the entire agreement between the parties with respect to the subject matter covered by them and supersede and replace all prior communications, representations (other than fraudulent representations), warranties, stipulations, undertakings and agreements whether oral or written between the parties. Each party acknowledges that it does not enter into this Agreement in reliance on any warranty, representation or undertaking other than those contained in this Agreement and that its only remedies are for breach of this Agreement, provided that this shall not exclude any liability which either party would otherwise have to the other in respect of any statements made fraudulently by or on behalf of it prior to the date of this Agreement.

33. Law of Agreement or Jurisdiction

- 33.1 This Agreement shall be governed by the laws of England and Wales and the parties submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of England and Wales.

34. Discretion of the Councils

- 34.1 The discretion of any Council shall not be fettered or otherwise affected by the terms of this Agreement.

THE COMMON SEAL OF

[] Council

was affixed in the presence of

SIGNED BY

Duly authorised for and

on behalf of Welsh Local Government Association

in the presence of

Schedule 1 Constitution of the Joint Committee

- 1 All 22 Councils shall appoint one representative as voting members of the Joint Committee.
- 2 The Joint Committee shall appoint one of its voting members as chair and one of its voting members as vice chair.
- 3 Unless they have already been appointed by their Council as its representative the Councils shall appoint the following persons (subject to the agreement of such persons) as non-voting members of the Joint Committee:
 - 3.1 A WLGA spokesperson for health and social services.
 - 3.2 A WLGA deputy spokesperson for health and social services.
 - 3.3 The executive leader or a deputy in respect of one of those roles of the Host Council.
 - 3.4 The Co-chairs of the Combined Governance Board.
- 4 The relevant Councils may nominate one or more substitute members from, subject to notification being given to the officer acting as Monitoring Officer to the Joint Committee before the start of the meeting. The member appointed as a substitute shall have full voting rights where the member for whom they are substituting does not attend.
- 5 Each voting member of the Joint Committee shall comply with the Code of Conduct of their Council when acting as a Member of the Joint Committee.
- 6 The Host Council or, as the case may be the relevant councils may remove any voting member or substitute voting members of the Joint Committee and appoint a different representative of the Host Council or, as the case may be, the same council as the member or substitute being replaced by giving written notice to the officer who is acting as Monitoring Officer to the Joint Committee.
- 7 Each voting member of the Joint Committee shall have one vote.
- 8 Each member of the Joint Committee shall serve upon the Joint Committee for as long as he or she is appointed to the Joint Committee by the relevant Councils, but a member shall cease to be a member of the Joint Committee if he or she ceases to be a member of the Council of which he or she was a member when he or she was appointed to the Joint Committee or if the Councils remove him or her as a member of the Joint Committee.
- 9 Any casual vacancies howsoever arising shall be filled by the Councils by notice in writing sent to the officer who is acting as Monitoring Officer to the Joint Committee.
- 10 Unless otherwise agreed by the Councils, meetings of the Joint Committee shall be held at the offices of the WLGA, Host Council or virtually.
- 11 The Joint Committee shall meet at least once annually.

- 12 The officer who is acting as Monitoring Officer to the Joint Committee shall call additional meetings at the direction of the chair by providing at least three clear days' notice to members of the Joint Committee, unless the meeting is called at shorter notice. The officer who is acting as Monitoring Officer to the Joint Committee must call a meeting of the Joint Committee if all the voting members of the Joint Committee request it or the Head of Paid Service of each Council requests it.
- 13 Meetings shall be notified to members of the Joint Committee by the officer who is acting as Monitoring Officer to the Joint Committee.
- 14 The officer who is acting as Monitoring Officer to the Joint Committee shall send electronically to all members and relevant officers of each Council the agenda for each meeting of the Joint Committee no later than three clear days before the date of the relevant meeting unless the meeting is convened at shorter notice
- 15 The officer who is acting as Monitoring Officer to the Joint Committee shall arrange for written minutes to be taken of each meeting of the Joint Committee and shall present them to the Joint Committee at its next meeting for approval as a correct record. The Officer who is acting as Monitoring Officer to the Joint Committee shall circulate the minutes to the Councils prior to the next meeting of the Joint Committee. If the Joint Committee confirms that the minutes contain an accurate record of the previous meeting, those minutes shall be signed by the chair or vice-Chair.
- 16 A meeting of the Joint Committee shall require a quorum of 60% of the voting members. If there is a quorum of members present but neither the chair nor the vice-chair is present, the members present shall designate one member to preside as chair for that meeting.
- 17 Subject to the provisions of any enactment all questions coming or arising before the Joint Committee shall be decided by a majority of the members of the Joint Committee immediately present and voting thereon. In the case of an equality of votes the chair shall have a casting vote. Subject to paragraph 18 below all voting shall be by a show of hands.
- 18 Any member of the Joint Committee may request the Joint Committee to record the votes of individual members of the Joint Committee on a matter for decision.
- 19 The order of business shall be indicated in the agenda for the meeting.
- 20 Any member of the Councils who is not a member of the Joint Committee is entitled to attend the Joint Committee but he or she shall not be entitled to vote, shall not take part in the consideration or discussion of any business, save by leave of the chair and comments will be recorded only on the direction of the chair.
- 21 A meeting of a principal council shall be open to the public except to the extent that they are excluded (whether during the whole or part of the proceedings).The public may be excluded from a meeting of the Joint Committee during an item of business whenever it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the public were present during that item, confidential information as defined in section 100A(3) of the Local Government Act 1972 or exempt

information as defined in section 100I of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed to them. In view of the sensitivity of the matters for which the Joint Committee is responsible it is to be expected that most business to be transacted at meetings of the Joint Committee will include confidential or exempt information but the Joint Committee will consider this in respect of every item of business to be considered at a meeting of the Joint Committee.

- 22 Unless members of the public are excluded from a meeting of the Joint Committee in accordance with paragraph 21 above meetings of the Joint Committee will be open to the public.
- 23 Members of the public wishing to address the Joint Committee (or a sub-committee of the Joint Committee) on reports contained within the agenda for the meeting may at the discretion of the Chair be given the opportunity to do so.
- 24 Each Council may call in any decision of the Joint Committee in accordance with the overview and scrutiny provisions of that Council's constitution. If any decision of the Joint Committee is subject to call in by a Council, the Joint Committee shall take no action to implement that decision unless the call in process upholds the decision.
25. The Joint Committee may delegate a function to an officer. At the commencement of this agreement, the Joint Committee has delegated functions to the Director of Operations as outlined in Schedule 5

Schedule 2 Terms of Reference of the NAS Combined Governance Board

Functions and responsibilities of the Combined Governance Board

- 1 The Combined Governance Board shall have the following responsibilities:
 - 1.1 To provide political and professional leadership and advice to inform the overall strategic direction of the National Adoption Service in Wales.
 - 1.2 To hold the Regional Collaboratives (and their staff), the Director of Operations and central team, the VAA's and other services accountable for the delivery and performance of their services within the National Adoption Service arrangements.
 - 1.3 To approve for submission to the Joint Committee as prepared by the Director of Operations / central team.
 - An annual programme of work for the National Adoption Service.
 - A half year and full year progress report for the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA – Full Council), the Minister for Health and Social Service and the Welsh Government.
 - The budget and financial management arrangements of services and the office of the Director of Operations.
 - 1.4 To monitor and have oversight of:
 - The performance of the National Adoption Service to ensure its successful delivery and improvements in the adoption process to lead to positive outcomes for children and adults affected by adoption.
 - The quality of engagement with the Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) and service user representatives at central and regional levels.
 - Compliance with The Directions
 - Compliance with the Conflict-of-Interest Protocol
 - 1.5 To consider and make recommendations for the future direction of the National Adoption Service using:
 - Information and data, including from the National Performance System in relation to the services as a whole, each Regional Collaborative, the VAA's and other services.
 - Professional and best practice advice from the sector.
 - The views of children, young people and adults who use services.
 - Other evidence including reports from the Director of Operations.

- 1.6 To ensure arrangements are in place for the flow of information, including receipt of minutes and papers, between the Combined Governance Board and:
- The Joint Committee.
 - Regional Management Committees.
 - Local government members and officers across Wales.
 - Equivalent bodies in VAA's and other services.
- 1.7 To encourage and enable the statutory and voluntary sectors to work in partnership to deliver the best outcomes for children and adults affected by adoption.
- 1.8 To ensure that the views of all stakeholders, including those who use adoption services, are represented effectively both at national and regional levels.
- 1.9 To ensure the National Adoption Service is working within Welsh Government guidance and strategies for children particularly looked after and adopted children.
- 1.10 To ensure that due consideration is given to the need for Welsh Language services in planning and delivery of adoption services throughout Wales.
- 1.11 To support the delivery of adoption services through the National Adoption Service arrangements to ensure it reflects the best possible practice and is based on a culture of continuous improvement.
- 1.12 To notify Joint Committee and Welsh Ministers of any issues regarding the National Adoption Service which it considers need to be drawn to their attention.
- 2 Membership of the Combined Governance Board will comprise of:
- WLGA Spokesperson for Health and Social Services or their representative.
 - WLGA Deputy Spokesperson for Health and Social Services
 - Independent Chair of the National Adoption Service Advisory Group (Chair of the Advisory Group and Co-Chair of the Combined Governance Board Meeting).
 - Leader (or nominated executive representative) of Host Council.
 - Elected member representative for each of the 5 Regional Adoption Collaboratives (from which the Vice Chair will be drawn).
 - Director / Head of Service from each of the Regional Collaboratives.
 - Senior officer representative of the Host Council.
 - Representative of the 5 VAAs in Wales.
 - Officer representative from the WLGA.

- Representative from the Association of Directors for Social Services Cymru (ADSSC).
 - Representative of Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW).
 - A Designated doctor for Safeguarding/Looked After Children.
 - A current RAC Adoption Panel Medical Advisor.
 - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) representative.
 - Representative of a Social Research Centre (currently Cardiff University, CASCADE).
 - Representative of Children's Commissioner for Wales.
 - Representative of CAF/CASS Cymru
 - Citizen or service user.
 - Legal services representative from the Host Council.
 - Director of Operations, National Adoption Service and secretariat.
- 3 The Joint Committee may invite other persons to attend meetings of the Combined Governance Board as observers.
- 4 The terms of reference of the Combined Governance Board shall be reviewed by the Joint Committee at least once a year which may make amendments to the terms of reference.

Schedule 3 Notice Provisions

Welsh Local Government Association
One Canal Parade,
Dumballs Road
CARDIFF
CF10 5BF

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Municipal Offices
Civic Centre
Ebbw Vale
NP23 6XB

Bridgend County Borough Council
Civic Offices
Angel Street
Bridgend
CF31 4WB

Caerphilly County Borough Council
Ty Penalta
Tredomen Park
Ystrad Mynach Hengoed
CF82 7PG

The County Council of the City and County of Cardiff
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Carmarthenshire County Council
County Hall
Carmarthen
Carmarthenshire
SA31 1JP

Ceredigion County Council
Neuadd Cyngor
Ceredigion
Penmorfa
Aberaeron
Ceredigion
SA46 OPA

Conwy County Borough Council
Bodlondeb
Bangor Road
Conwy
LL32 8DU

Denbighshire County Council
County Hall
Wynnstay Road
Ruthin
LL15 1YN

Flintshire County Council
County Hall
Mold
CH7 6NB

Gwynedd Council
Council Offices
Shirehall Street
Caernarfon
LL55 1SH

Isle of Anglesey County Council
Council Offices
Llangefni
LL77 7TW

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Civic Centre
Merthyr Tydfil
CF47 8AN

Monmouthshire County Council
PO Box 106
Caldicot
NP26 9AN

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Port Talbot Civic Centre
Port Talbot
SA13 1PJ

Newport City Council
Civic Centre
Godfrey Road
Newport
NP20 4UR

Pembrokeshire County Council
County Hall
Haverfordwest
Pembrokeshire
SA61 1TP

Powys County Council
Powys County Hall
Spa Road East
Llandrindod Wells
Powys
LD1 5LG

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
The Pavilions
Cambrian Park
Clydach Vale
Tonypany
CF40 2XX

The Council of the City and County of Swansea
Civic Centre
Oystermouth Road
Swansea
SA1 3SN

Torfaen County Borough Council
Civic Centre
Pontypool
Torfaen
NP4 6YB

Vale of Glamorgan Council
Civic Offices
Holton Road
Barry
Vale of Glamorgan
CF63 4RU

Wrexham County Borough Council
The Guildhall
Wrexham
LL11 1AY

[The Councils to provide details of fax numbers and e-mail addresses.]

Schedule 4 Financial Memorandum

- 1 The core budget for the office of the Director of Operations and national functions of the National Adoption Service is provided by a 'top slice' of the Revenue Support Grant and made available to the NAS via the Welsh Local Government Association. This arrangement was agreed by the Co-ordinating Committee of the WLGA in March 2014 as part of its agreement to the proposals to establish NAS.
- 2 The Councils shall ensure that:
 - 2.1 The Joint Committee, the Combined Governance Board and the Director of Operations make appropriate use of the National Adoption Services budget to perform their functions and to facilitate achievement of the aims in clause 2 of this Agreement.
 - 2.2 There are adequate financial and accounting procedures for the purposes of this Agreement.
- 3 The Host Council will provide the financial administrative accounting system and appropriate associated support for the discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions on behalf of the Councils. Subject to the statutory role of each Council's Section 151 Officer in relation to their Council, the Host Council shall provide for the purposes of this Agreement the services of its Section 151 Officer to the Joint Committee.
- 4 The Director of Operations shall submit annual monitoring and accounting reports to the Joint Committee which shall include explanations for any variances against the profiled budget.
- 5 The Joint Committee shall review the expenditure and forecast to ensure that the allocated budget is being correctly adhered to.
- 6 The Joint Committee shall be presented with a report on the proposed use of the budget for the discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions for approval on behalf of the Councils for the following financial year.
- 7 The Host Council shall apply its Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules to the discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions on behalf of the Councils pursuant to this Agreement.
- 8 Proportionate Basis for costs and liabilities of the Councils arising under the Agreement:

The Proportionate Basis for which each Council shall be liable for costs arising under the Agreement (to the extent that the same exceed the 'top slice' of the Revenue Support Grant made available to the Joint Committee) shall be calculated by reference to the proportion that the population of each Council's area makes of the total population of Wales. Any indemnity to be funded by all Councils shall be calculated on the same basis.

Schedule 5 Specified and Agreed Functions and Services

1 Service Vision

- 1.1 The Councils wish to use the joint discharge of the Specified Functions to improve the performance of the Councils and partners in meeting the needs of those children who require permanence through adoption by bringing together the best practice from each authority and partner into an integrated adoption service and similarly for an agreed range of fostering functions.
- 1.2 The Councils agree that the joint discharge of the Specified and Agreed Functions should be underpinned by the guiding principles that looked after children and prospective adopters alike are advantaged by the joint discharge of functions and that the joint discharge of functions is demonstrably more efficient and flexible in delivering the Services.

2 Aims, Principles and Objectives of the joint discharge of the Specified Functions for adoption services

- 2.1 Enabling the Councils to comply with their obligations under the Directions.
- 2.2 Delivering a comprehensive adoption service at a national level.
- 2.3 Exercising oversight of Councils' compliance with legislation, regulations, minimum standards, local procedures and the performance management framework set by the Welsh Government and accountable to the Senedd / Welsh Parliament in line with the Directions.
- 2.4 Ensuring that services are carried out in a timely and efficient way and based upon the assessed needs of those persons requiring the service.
- 2.5 Ensuring that persons seeking approval as adoptive parents are welcomed without prejudice and delay and that their applications are considered on their individual merit.
- 2.6 Developing a recruitment strategy which ensures a range of adoptive placements are available nationally or through external agencies to ensure timely placements for all children where the placement plan is adoption.
- 2.7 Providing a child focused placement service to ensure that children are appropriately matched with adopters who can meet their needs throughout their childhood.
- 2.8 Providing a range of pre and post adoption support and intermediary services in conjunction with statutory and voluntary sector providers.
- 2.9 Establishing effective working links with key stakeholders.

- 2.10 Maintaining effective working links with local authority children's services departments to ensure that agency functions in relation to children requiring adoptive placements are maintained.
- 2.11 Utilising and building upon examples of good practice and promote consistency, excellence and continuous improvement.
- 2.12 Complying with the requirements of external audit and inspection.
- 2.13 Ensuring that customer feedback and the views of service users are obtained and considered in the development of services.

3 Aims, Principles and Objectives of the joint discharge of the Agreed Functions for fostering services through Foster Wales

- 3.1 National leadership to ensure consistency of approach on a regional and local authority basis
- 3.2 Commission / monitoring of the programme management contract with Association for fostering and adoption Cymru (AFA Cymru) / creation of a post for this function plus oversight / support of programme manager's work
- 3.3 Maintaining a performance framework and supporting performance reporting at national and regional level to inform improvement
- 3.4 Production of annual report and any other reporting required
- 3.5 Administration of agreed Foster Wales national Governance arrangements and support to Regional Development Manager meetings, practice forums and task & finish groups
- 3.6 Promotion of best practice and culture of continuous improvement currently as below:
 - Oversight and ongoing development of the Foster Wales brand
 - Production of national Policy and Procedures handbook incl. for recruitment
 - Core Offer of support
 - Fees and Allowances
 - Learning and Development framework
- 3.7 Commissioning and contract monitoring of contracts required for FW work – incl. website, brand repository, national marketing manager, launch & campaigns.
- 3.8 Administration of FW finance and grants and accountancy support. Securing resourcing through new / additional finance where possible.

4 The Specified and Agreed Functions

- 4.1 The Specified and Agreed Functions are:

The functions of the Director of Operations and central team including the following:

- Providing leadership to set the direction for NAS and Foster Wales including strategic planning by agreeing priorities, targets and resourcing following engagement with partners and stakeholders as well as support to operational planning.
- Reviewing progress including analysis of performance data and service information from the regions and VAA's.
- Providing annual and mid-year reports each year for agreement by the Combined Governance Board, Joint Committee and submission to Welsh Ministers as well as to WLGA and ADSS-C where required.
- Providing specific functions nationally to support and enable NAS operations (currently as below)
 - Establishing and maintaining a website for the National Adoption Service for Wales
 - Management of the Adoption Register for Wales (under contract from Welsh Government)
 - Commissioning and contracting national contracts to support service delivery functions and support
 - Maintaining arrangements for service user engagement across Wales
 - Leadership, matrix management oversight, advice and support to regions and VAA's.
 - Promotion of best practice and a culture of continuous improvement throughout the NAS.
 - Securing appropriate resourcing through new / additional finance or re-profiling of existing as well as managing the central team allocation, grants and investment.
 - Strategic commissioning as necessary for the discharge of functions
 - Maintaining arrangements for national governance and allied sub / task & finish groups to engage stakeholders in carrying out the actions / work agreed by the Combined Governance Board
 - Promotion of adoption, including national PR and marketing and the provision of the 'face and voice' of adoption in Wales.
 - Stakeholder and relationship management including with allied services and organisations in Wales and UK, Ministers and Welsh Government.
- Providing specific functions nationally to support and enable Foster Wales operations (currently as below)
 - Establishing and maintaining a national website for Foster Wales

- Commissioning and contracting national contracts to support service delivery functions and support
- Leadership, matrix management oversight, advice and support to regions and LA's
- Promotion of best practice and a culture of continuous improvement
- Managing the central team allocation, grants and investment, enabling negotiations with funding bodies to secure ongoing resourcing.
- Maintaining arrangements for national governance and allied sub / task & finish groups to engage stakeholders in carrying out the actions / work agreed by the Lead Heads of Children's Services Group
- Promotion of Foster Wales, including national PR and marketing.
- Stakeholder and relationship management including with allied services and organisations in Wales and UK, Ministers and Welsh Government.

5 The Services

5.1 The services to be provided by the host local authority to facilitate the discharge of the Joint Committee's function shall be detailed in a separate agreement but will be provided subject to and on the overarching terms and conditions set out in this Agreement . Such Host services may include:

(i) Office accommodation and allied facilities services

(ii) Employment of staff, associated human resource functions and advising on workforce planning / issues

(iii) Use of its IT systems and databases, including provision of a separate email domain/s and stand-alone websites as needed

(iv) Finance / accounting services, supporting management of core budget and grant aid including facilitating the transfer of funds to relevant local government or partners agencies of NAS and Foster Wales.

(v) Information security advice and support, ensuring compliance with changing legislation

(vi) Facilitation of procurement and contracting requirements to deliver functions

(vii) Legal advice as required incl. for contracts.

(viii) Engagement of Officers and Members in governance arrangements as required by the Directions

5.2 The Host Authority may make arrangements with third parties for the discharge of the Services and recharge such costs to the Joint

Committee. The Host Authority shall first discuss such matters with the Director of Operations.

Schedule 6 Terms of Reference for the Lead Head of Children's Services Group

1 Objectives and Scope

- 1.1 The main objectives of this group are:
- (a) To support the strategic oversight of Foster Wales
 - (b) To consider the implications at local and regional level arising from the transition to Foster Wales
 - (c) To consider the development needs of services at local, regional, and national level
 - (d) To seek and support solutions to overcome barriers and challenges
 - (e) To continue to develop and maintain collaboration across local authority fostering
 - (f) To consider reports presented, agree actions, make decisions, and monitor progress
 - (g) To consider performance reports and monitor KPIs as identified and agreed
 - (h) To make recommendations for future areas of work programme development

2 Membership

- 2.1 Core membership will include:
- (a) 6 x Regional designated Lead Head of Children's Services
 - (b) Director of the National Adoption Service
 - (c) 6 x Regional Development Managers
 - (d) A Director of Social Services
 - (e) Programme Manager
 - (f) An officer of the Welsh Local Government Association
- 2.2 Arrangements will be put in place to ensure good links between this meeting and members including briefing the WLGA spokesperson for health and Social Care or their nominated Deputy with responsibility for children's services.

3 Frequency of meetings

- 3.1 Meetings will be held at an agreed frequency no less than quarterly (currently monthly), dates and times will be scheduled and provided with advanced notice.

4 Accountability and communication

- 4.1 The group is accountable to the Joint Committee, which holds responsibility for overall oversight of the National Adoption Service and Foster Wales.
- 4.2 Regional representatives are responsible for ensuring that effective communication channels are in place. This should include mechanisms for the sharing of information, decisions, and outcomes from this group to relevant forums and individuals within their own region.

Schedule 7 Scheme of Functions Delegated to the Director of Operations

Part One

SCHEME OVERVIEW

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The National Adoption Service for Wales (NAS) operates in a multi-agency partnership context. This is a complex arrangement best described as a local government led collaborative with a range of different interfaces including the voluntary sector. In order that the NAS national / central team staff can carry out its functions effectively under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015, it is essential that employees at all levels of the organisation are clear that they have the delegated authority to make decisions. It is also important that employees are clear where they do not have the authority to make decisions.
- 1.2. The Scheme of Delegation is the framework creating the authority to make a decision or discharge a function. Delegation also means that those to whom responsibility has been given are prepared to be accountable for the decisions they have been asked to make and the functions they discharge. Effective and transparent decision making also requires that those making a decision must be confident about the scope of their authority.
- 1.3. The aim of the Scheme of Delegation is to set out who has the authority to make decisions within the national / central team of the National Adoption Service for Wales. It is a companion document to the National Adoption Service in Wales Partnership Agreement and the Agreement for the Establishment of a Joint Committee for the National Adoption Service.
- 1.4. This Scheme of Delegation sets out who can carry out the functions. It does not explain how they are to be carried out. The NAS has adopted the procedures of the Host Council (Cardiff Council) which set out the rules for this. The Host Council is also the employer of NAS staff. As a result, NAS Officers must be familiar with the Host Council's:
 - Financial Procedure Rules (Part 4.6 of the Constitution)
 - Contract Standing Orders and any Procurement guidelines issued by the Host Council
 - Human Resources guidance and procedures
- 1.5. All powers within the Scheme of Delegation are to be exercised within approved budgets and all staffing and recruitment delegations take effect subject to approved HR guidelines.
- 1.6. At the commencement of this Agreement the full arrangements for Foster Wales are being developed but it is anticipated that its relationship to the Joint Committee will be the same as for NAS albeit that governance is managed through the Lead Heads of Children's Services (LHOCS) meeting and that delegated authority will operate in the same way. The Terms of Reference of the Lead Heads of Children's Services meeting are in Schedule 6 of this Joint Committee Agreement.

2. Arrangement of the Scheme of Delegation

- 2.1. . The Scheme of Delegation is arranged in three parts.
 - a) Scheme Overview
 - b) The Joint Committee and Combined Governance Board
 - c) The Director of Operations

3. The Joint Committee, Combined Governance Board and Regional Collaboratives

- 3.1. The complex nature of the arrangements has a number of key bodies either delivering the Adoption Services or setting overall strategy. They interact in a way that influences the approach to delegation.
- 3.2. The Joint Committee will, on behalf of the 22 Welsh Local Authorities, exercise their powers with reference to the provision of the collaborative arrangements for the National Adoption Service for Wales (NAS) and for Foster Wales (FW). It will be underpinned by a legal agreement (Joint Committee Agreement) and be comprised of Council Members. Its role will be to oversee the work of NAS and Foster Wales and specifically approve / receive the below:
 - The Annual Reports of NAS and of Foster Wales;
 - The annual programmes of work for the NAS and for Foster Wales;
 - The budget/s for the office of the Director and the national work of NAS and for Foster Wales; and
 - The agreement, and any changes required, for the Host Council support of the office of the Director to enable it to facilitate the work of NAS and FW.
- 3.3. For NAS (only) it will also oversee how the authorities work together to exercise their powers and comply with the National Assembly Directions (now Senedd Wales).
- 3.4. The Joint Committee has primary responsibility for the delegation framework as it may delegate a function to an officer.
- 3.5. The terms of reference for the Combined Governance Board are contained in schedule 2 of the Agreement for the Establishment of a Joint Committee for the National Adoption Services. The schedule indicates the Board must approve as prepared by the Director of Operations / central team the following:
 - An annual programme of work for the National Adoption Service.
 - A half year and full year progress report for the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA – Full Council), the Minister for Health and Social Service and the Welsh Government.
 - The budget and financial management arrangements of services and the office of the Director of Operations.
- 3.6. The terms of reference also hold the following accountable for the delivery and performance of their services within the NAS arrangements:
 - Regional Collaboratives (and their staff),
 - the Director of Operations and central team,
 - the Voluntary Adoption Agencies and other services
- 3.7. In order to support the work of the Combined Governance Board the Director of Operations will prepare the items listed in section 3.3 using the support of the Host Council where appropriate.
- 3.8. As the lead executive of the NAS, the Director of Operations has delegated authority from the Joint Committee to manage the organisation. The Director of Operations is also responsible for delegating other decision-making responsibilities to officers within NAS.
- 3.9. The Joint Committee delegates to the Combined Governance Board or Director of Operations all matters which it does not reserve to itself for decision.

- 3.10. The Director of Operations shall provide regular reports to the Combined Governance Board and Joint Committee on the discharge of the Specified Functions.
- 3.11. The delegation of functions and responsibilities both from the Joint Committee and the Director of Operations requires those using delegated authority to carry out those functions in a way that will not prevent the effective discharge of any functions or bring the NAS into disrepute or in any other way have an adverse effect on the NAS.
- 3.12. The scheme of delegation can be removed by the Joint Committee if it takes a formal decision to do so. In these circumstances the Joint Committee would assume those responsibilities that it had previously delegated or delegate these responsibilities to the Combined Governance Board. The Director of Operations can also remove delegations they have granted to their team and in doing so would assume the previously delegated responsibilities or transfer these to another member of their team.
- 3.13. Each region is made up of a number of specified local authorities. These are regional collaboratives overseen by Regional Management Boards. For the NAS to work effectively Partnership Agreement states there should be robust links between RMBs, the Combined Governance Board and the central team (led by the Director of Operations). The RMBs are required to produce an annual report submitted to the Director of Operations by 31st May each year. Other aspects of regional working include the Regional Joint Committees, Regional Operation Groups and a lead authority for each region.
- 3.14 There is no legislation underpinning Foster Wales. Existing regional meetings link to the national Lead Heads of Children's Services meeting which in turn reports to the Joint Committee.

4. Principles of Delegation

- 4.1. The scheme of delegation has a number of principles that underpin the approach adopted so that the transfer of responsibility for a task or function from the Joint Committee, Board Meeting or Director of Operations does not change the overall accountability.
- The Joint Committee, Combined Governance Board LHOC's meeting and the Director of Operations remain accountable for all their functions, even those they have delegated. In order to be assured that the responsibilities that they have delegated are being discharged properly they require information about the exercise of those functions. Appropriate management oversight must be exercised to ensure there is sharing of delegated decisions.
 - In order to make sound decisions, the authority to take decisions must be supported by appropriate skills and knowledge. Those exercising delegated decision-making powers must be made aware of the decisions that have been delegated to them, the limits of their authority and have access to relevant advice if appropriate.
 - A record of delegated decisions will be kept and shared with the Joint Committee and the Combined Governance Board. The frequency of the information to be received will be determined by the Joint Committee and Board but should not be less than quarterly. Where a decision has been formally delegated to the Director of Operations by the Joint Committee or the Combined Governance Board, the decision to delegate will be recorded in the Committee or Board minutes. The decision and its outcome will then be contained in a separate section within the Director of Operations' Quarterly Report to the following

Combined Governance Board. An equivalent process will be developed for Foster Wales

- If the post holder for a delegated decision is absent the line manager will be expected to make the decision. Should the decision be urgent, and a matter delegated to the Director of Operations the Chair of the Combined Governance Board will be able to make the decision in consultation with the Board and, in the case of the absence of the Director of Operations, the relevant staff reporting to the Director of Operations.
- Where a delegated decision is viewed by the postholder as requiring further discussion due to the sensitivity of the issue they should consider approaching the Director of Operations for advice. In the case of the Director of Operations this would involve the Chair of the Joint Committee or the Combined Governance Board as appropriate.

5. Variation, ownership and review of the scheme

- 5.1. The constitution of the Joint Committee includes authority to delegate a function to an officer (Schedule 1, paragraph 25). Variations to the Scheme of delegation will be approved by the Joint Committee and any deviation from it must be approved by the Joint Committee, with such deviations being reported to the next meeting.
- 5.2. For administrative purposes, the Director of Operations, on behalf of the Joint Committee, is the manager of the Scheme of Delegation and will keep the scheme under review in consultation with the Joint Committee Monitoring Officer who will be required to comment on the proposals. Any suggested amendments will be subject to consultation with the Combined Governance Board. Any proposed changes will be submitted to the Joint Committee unless authority to amend the scheme is delegated to the Combined Governance Board. If delegation occurs any changes to the Scheme of Delegation will be reported to the next Joint Committee.
- 5.3. However, the Scheme will be updated as often as is necessary to ensure it remains current, following review and consultation in accordance with paragraph 5.2.

Part Two

The Joint Committee, the Combined Governance Board, Regional Collaboratives, Lead Heads of Children's Services meeting and Director of Operations

a. The Joint Committee

1. The Agreement for the Establishment of a Joint Committee for the National Adoption Service indicates Welsh Councils have agreed to establish and participate in a joint committee to facilitate the delivery of the Specified and Agreed Functions with a view to their economical, efficient and effective discharge.
2. The Joint Committee is specifically responsible for:
 - a. The overall scheme of delegation.
 - b. establishing and delivering the NAS and Foster Wales strategic aims and objectives consistent with its overall strategic direction and within the agreed Welsh Government policy.
 - c. strategic direction and decisions as submitted by the Combined Governance Board and LHOC's meeting.
 - d. ensuring that the responsible minister is kept informed of any changes which are likely to impact on NAS strategic direction or the delivery of the

obligations set out in the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015.

b. The Combined Governance Board

3. The terms of reference of the Combined Governance Board (the Board) indicates the overall role is to provide strategic direction and decisions for submission to the Joint Committee to facilitate the delivery and improvement of adoption services on Wales through the National Adoption Service (NAS) arrangements.
4. The Board also holds the Regional Collaboratives and the Director of Operations and central team accountable for delivery and performance of their services within the NAS arrangements.
5. The Board is responsible for ensuring the Director of Operations has adequate resources to discharge the Specified Functions and deliver an effective NAS. In coming to a decision whether to recommend this to the Joint committee the Board will rely on the advice of the Director of Operations.

c. Regional Collaboratives

6. The Regional Collaboratives must provide an annual report to the Director of Operations by 31st May covering
 - a. The performance of the regional collaborative against the performance measures in the National Performance Management Framework
 - b. An analysis of the implementation of the annual work programme and plans to address any under-performance
 - c. Plans to develop the adoption service within the region in accordance with the national business priorities
 - d. Information regarding the resolution of complaints and determination of disputes at local and regional level and any impact on the provision of adoption services
7. The Scheme of Delegation recognises that the Director of Operations will need to act on behalf of the Combined Governance Board and the Joint Committee when working with the Regional Collaboratives.
8. The Scheme of Delegation recognises that the Director of Operations is not only a member of the Combined Governance Board but is also the principal professional advisor on delivery and improvement of adoption services in Wales through the National Adoption Service arrangements. This will include providing advice to the Joint Committee and Combined Governance Board on the Regional Collaborative arrangements including reporting on the position to the Board based on the reports that Regional Collaboratives must provide to the Director of Operations by 31st May of each year

d. The Director of Operations

7. The scheme of delegation will operate to enable the Director of Operations to carry out the following Specified and Agreed Functions:
 - a. Providing leadership to set the direction for NAS including strategic planning by agreeing priorities, targets and resourcing following engagement with partners and stakeholders as well as support to operational planning.
 - b. Reviewing progress including analysis of performance data and service information from the regions and VAA's.
 - c. Providing annual and mid-year reports each year for agreement by the Combined Governance Board, Joint Committee, and submission to

Welsh Ministers as well as to WLGA and ADSS-C where required;
and

- d. Providing specific functions nationally to support and enable NAS operations including those outlined in the table below.

MATTERS DELEGATED BY THE JOINT COMMITTEE TO THE DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS. (The delivery of these delegated functions will be overseen on a day-to-day basis by the Combined Governance Board for NAS and the Lead Heads of Services meeting for Foster Wales)

Strategic Direction and Business Planning

The Director of Operations is responsible for:

- Overseeing the development of the annual programme of work and budget for the National Adoption Service (incl. Foster Wales). This will include a medium term (3 year) financial plan accompanied by the assumptions on which longer term planning is based
- A half year and full year progress report for the Welsh Ministers and the Welsh Government with required oversight of the Combined Governance Board and the Joint Committee.

Financial Management, Commissioning, Propriety and Value for Money

The Director of Operations is responsible for:

- Ensuring the NAS stays within its overall budget
- Ensuring the NAS operates within the financial regulations of the Host Council
- Signing agreements or other documents on behalf of the Joint Committee and/or the Combined Governance Board
- Securing appropriate resourcing through new/additional finance or reprofiling of existing as well as managing the central team allocation, grants and investment
- Ensuring the NAS complies with any requirements to publish information as required by legislation and the Welsh Government
- Approving the level of delegation for non-pay expenditure within the overall delegation scheme as approved by the Joint Committee and/or the Combined Governance Board
- Approving those posts as having the responsibility of Budget Holder
- Authorising contracts up to £1m, and in excess of £1m in conjunction with the Combined Governance Board
- Taking overall responsibility for the control of the NAS's fixed assets
- Ensures the Host Council's agreed systems of control are applied within the NAS to protect against fraud and losses including data losses
- Strategic Commissioning as necessary for the discharge of functions
- Ensuring all staff are aware that the NAS operates within the Host Council's:
 - Financial Regulations and procedures.
 - Contract Standing Orders and any Procurement guidelines issued by the Host; and
 - Human Resources guidance and procedures

Risk Management and Assurance

The Director of Operations is responsible for:

- Ensuring the risks to the Annual Plan are identified, assessed, managed and escalated where necessary in accordance with the Host Council's risk management policy
- Monitoring, controlling and assuring the Joint Committee and Combined Governance Board of the business and regulatory risks for which they are responsible

Information and Information Governance

The Director of Operations is responsible for:

- Understanding and addressing the risks to the information assets under their control or delegated to them by the Joint Committee and/or Combined Governance Board
- Providing assurance to the Host Council's SIRO on the security and use of information assets
- Ensuring data is managed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998
- Approving the release of information about the provision of National Adoption Services
- Establishing and maintaining a website for the National Adoption Service for Wales
- Promotion of adoption, including PR and marketing and the provision of the 'face and voice' of adoption in Wales
- Management of the Adoption Register for Wales (under contract from the Welsh Government)
- Maintaining arrangements for service user engagement across Wales

Dispute Resolution

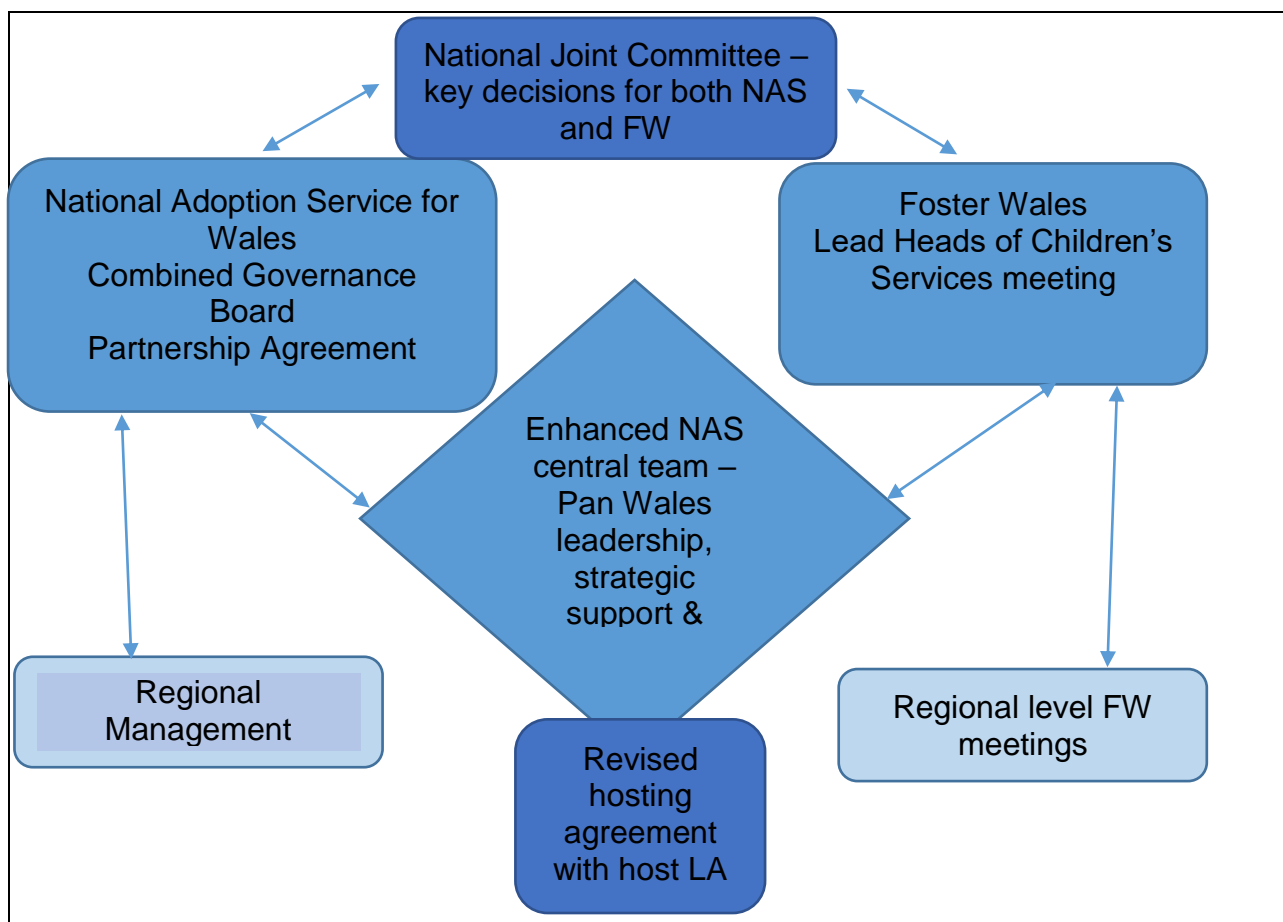
The Director of Operations is responsible for:

- Producing and implementing a plan to resolve any dispute that arises in relation to any aspect of the Agreement for the Establishment of a Joint Committee for the National Adoption Service

Regional Arrangements and Regional Collaboratives

- Advising the Joint Committee and/or the Combined Governance Board on the working arrangements for the Regional Collaboratives
- Leadership, matrix management oversight, advice and support to regions and VAA's
- Maintaining arrangements for national governance and allied sub/task & finish groups to engage stakeholders in carrying out the actions/work agreed by the Combined Governance Board

Governance



WLGA Joint Committee (all 22 LA’s) over-sees NAS & Foster Wales:

The Joint Committee will, on behalf of the 22 Welsh Local Authorities, exercise their powers with reference to the provision of the collaborative arrangements for the National Adoption Service for Wales (NAS) and for Foster Wales (FW). It will be underpinned by a legal agreement (Joint Committee Agreement) and be comprised of Council Members. Its role will be to oversee the work of NAS and Foster Wales and specifically approve / receive the below:

- The Annual Reports of NAS and of Foster Wales;
- The annual programmes of work for the NAS and for Foster Wales;
- The budget/s for the office of the Director and the national work of NAS and for Foster Wales; and
- The agreement, and any changes required, for the host LA support of the office of the Director to enable it to facilitate the work of NAS and FW.

For NAS only it will also oversee how the authorities work together to exercise their powers and comply with the National Assembly Directions.

NAS - National level - Combined Governance Board (CGB)

Provides strategic direction and decision making to facilitate the delivery and improvement of adoption services in Wales through the National Adoption Service arrangements in line the Senedd Directions and its Terms of Reference.

Foster Wales - National level - Lead Heads of Children's Services meeting

Provides strategic direction and decision making in relation to the agreed national and regional functions of Foster Wales on behalf of Welsh local authorities in line with its Terms of Reference.

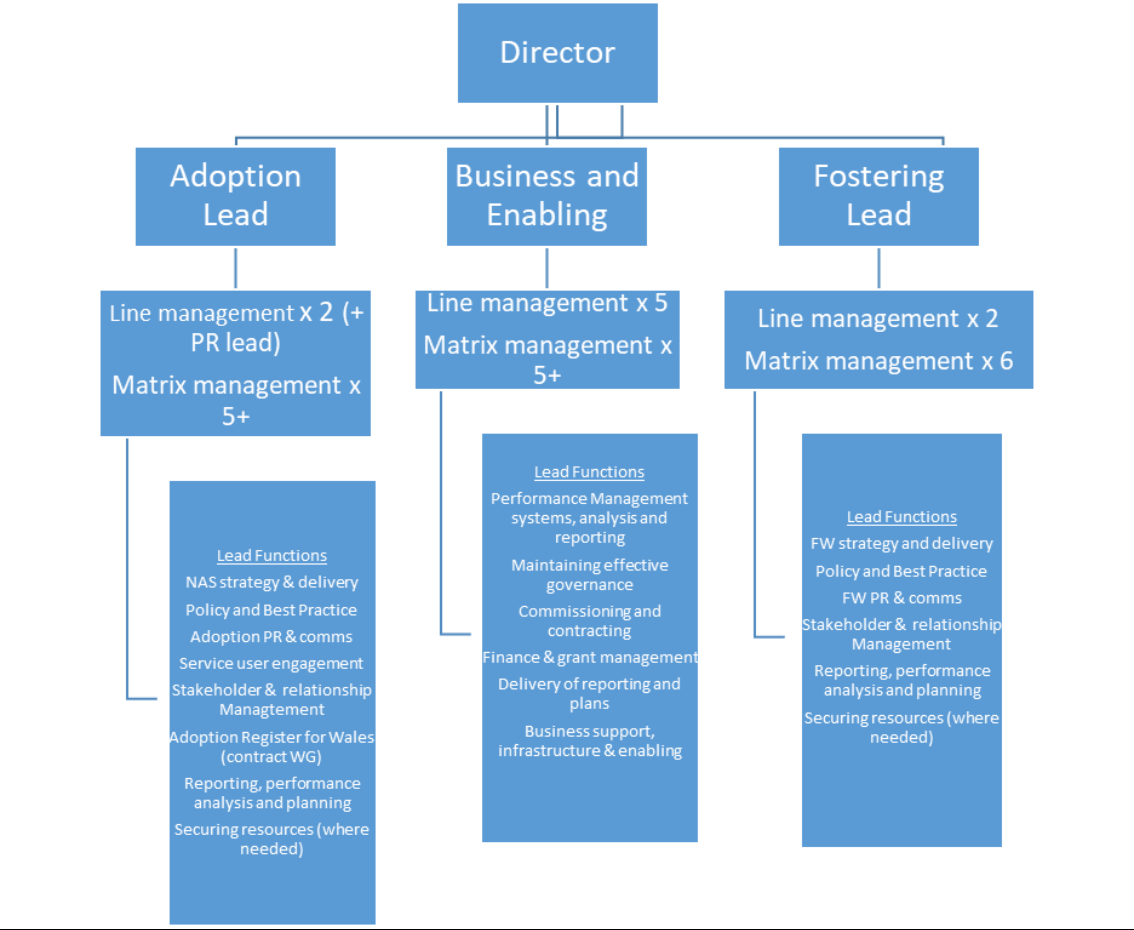
NAS – regional / LA level - Regional Management Boards & VAA's Boards

Each region is made up of specified local authority areas, set out in the Directions and overseen by Regional Management Boards (RMB's). Primary role is to coordinate adoption activities at the regional level and to implement decisions and strategies from the national Governance Board; may also have roles determined by their legal agreement. Plus VAA equivalent.

Foster Wales - regional / LA level - Regional HoS meeting

These are now in place and may be a specific FW meeting or included in the agenda of pre-existing HoS or HoS & DSS regional meetings.

Central team – leadership and enabling



This page is intentionally left blank



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21st MARCH 2022

RCT LIBRARY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2022/25

REPORT OF DIRECTOR - PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION, AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CLLR. RHYS LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND COMMUNITIES

Author: Wendy Edwards, Service Director – Community Services - 07557082875

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an opportunity to review the Draft Strategy for Rhondda Cynon Taf's Library Service and its associated Action Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Notes the content of the report.
- 2.2 Approves the Library Service's proposed Strategy and Action Plan 2022/25.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Core entitlement 12 of the Welsh Public Library Standards requires every library authority in Wales to produce a Strategy and Action Plan that outlines the future development of its public library service. Once approved these documents must be placed on the Council's website so that the public can access them easily.
- 3.2 It is important for the Library Service to have a clear vision, strategy, and plan for the improvement of services that aligns to the Council's Corporate Plan and for residents to have access to this information. This is of particular importance at this time due to the impact Covid has had on the service and on its customers. Footfall has reduced significantly since the pre-Covid period and there will be a need to work with a wider range of partners to develop

further activities and services to attract people back to our venues so that they can benefit from the opportunities available.

- 3.3 Covid has also had a significant impact on the way in which some customers, many of them new members, wish to engage with the service. There has been a 110% increase in the number of downloads of e-books and e-audiobooks and the Strategy and Action Plan indicates how the service will transition to the delivery of blended provision in order to retain new customers who prefer to engage online and attract other residents to this service.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 requires local authorities to ensure the provision of a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service without specifying what that entails. In Wales the duty 'to superintend and promote the improvement of the public library service provided through local authorities' has been devolved to the relevant Welsh Minister (currently the Minister for Local Government) and since 2002 this duty has been fulfilled through the Welsh Public Library Standards. These standards consist of 12 core entitlements and 15 Quality Indicators.
- 4.2 Core entitlement 12 of the Welsh Public Library Standards requires every local authority in Wales to produce a strategy and action plan that outlines the future development of its public library service. Once approved these documents must be placed on the Council's website so that they can be easily accessible to the public.
- 4.3 Developing a Strategy and Action Plan is also important as it ensures that the library service is aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan and to other local and national strategies so that it supports the wider Council and Welsh Government agenda.
- 4.4 Rhondda Cynon Taf's first Strategy and Action Plan was produced in 2015 and the second in 2019. This third strategy is designed to cover a three-year period and it is especially significant as it comes at the end of a challenging period for public-facing services as a result of the Covid pandemic.
- 4.5 The draft Strategy and Action Plan was reviewed by the Public Service Delivery, Community and Prosperity on 17th February and one amendment has been made to the Action Plan in accordance with the recommendation of the Committee.

5. IMPACT OF THE COVID PANDEMIC ON THE 2019/20 ACTION PLAN

- 5.1 It should be noted that all static and mobile library provision was suspended in March 2020 during the National Lockdown and that library staff were transferred to other duties to support residents. However, static libraries and the @homelibraryservice reopened at the end of June 2020 and delivered its

services in line with Welsh Government guidance at that time. Continuing to provide access to services throughout this period with frequent changes to the guidance as Wales progressed through different Alert Levels was challenging.

5.2 The service adapted its provision to meet the new conditions so that we could continue to support residents to access books and other library services that supported their wellbeing at this difficult time:

- Welsh Government provided additional funds for e-books and e-audiobooks which saw a boost in downloads.
- Ancestry made its database accessible from home for members of the Library Service which resulted in an increase in the number of customers using its databases for family history and other research.
- Story-telling and craft sessions delivered by the Youth Librarian and her team were transferred online.
- Quizzes and other activities using photographs and materials from the service's Local Studies and Photographic Archive collections were placed on the Library Service's Facebook page.
- Colleagues in IT ensured that new members were able for the first time to register online.
- An Order and Collect service was introduced so that customers could order their books online or by phone and pick them up within 15 minutes slots at their nearest library.
- More self-service machines were installed to reduce the risk of virus transmission (funded by Welsh Government).
- The @homelibraryservice was expanded to provide book deliveries to residents who would normally rely on the mobile library service.
- Detailed risk assessments were undertaken, and protective measures implemented to protect customers and staff.

6. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

6.1 Appendix 1 highlights the progress made against the priorities outlined in the 2019-21 Action Plan in more detail, but the following highlights are worthy of note:

- The role played by the Library Service in the development of community hubs -work on Llys Cadwyn (Pontypridd) and Porth Plaza was completed

and both venues played an important role as Community Resilience Hubs supporting residents in their area.

- The capital investment made by the Council and Welsh Government in improving library facilities at Treorchy library in readiness for its launch as a cultural hub in partnership with the Park and Dare Theatre.
- The progress made in use of digital technology – there was a 110% increase in loans of digital materials between April/May 2019 and April/May 2020.
- Significant investment in digital equipment and enhancement of digital skills among staff.
- The success of the service in gaining external funding to enhance the range of opportunities/activities on offer to customers.

6.2 In addition the merging of the One4All service with the Library Service offers further opportunities to enhance the provision of advice and information available to residents.

6.3 A key aim of the 2019-21 Action Plan was to increase visitor numbers to libraries. Unsurprisingly, the National and Local Lockdowns as well as the restrictions placed on browsing, delivery and facilitation of learning and other community-based activities throughout most of 2020 and 2021 has had an adverse effect on visitor numbers resulting in fewer visits to libraries than in 2018/19. This was unavoidable and the new proposed strategy will focus on further developing services that will attract current customers back to libraries and attracting new customers.

7. THE DRAFT LIBRARY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2022/25

7.1 The Draft Strategy can be seen at Appendix 2 and the draft Action Plan is at Appendix 3. The Draft Strategy outlines the services currently available and identifies the key priorities proposed for the next 3 years and the outcomes and impact achieving these will have. The Draft Action Plan outlines the actions that will be implemented to ensure that the desired outcomes and impacts are achieved.

7.2 The key priorities proposed for the next three years are:

- Keeping the service relevant in a rapidly changing environment.
- Improving the library experience for all customers.
- Take the opportunities and lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic to inform and shape future provision.

7.3 To achieve these priorities, the service will:

- Further enhance the programme of digitisation of resources and make these available online so that customers can access collections at any time.
- Harness new IT developments to improve the customer experience.
- Blend traditional and digital services by developing a Digital strategy for libraries.
- Build on online delivery of services to children identified during Covid-19 pandemic to strengthen, expand, and increase the reach of these services to families across RCT.
- Ensure that all staff have the skills required to provide a service that remains relevant at a time when innovations in technology and changing patterns of usage are having an impact on how customers want to engage with the service.
- Embed new models of delivery and monitor customer feedback to ensure they achieve their objectives.
- Support the further development of community hubs.
- Ensure that residents have access to a broad range of learning opportunities.
- Work with partners to provide a wider range of information, advice, and support on well-being and health.
- Work with partners and volunteers in the heritage, arts and cultural sectors to develop a range of cultural activities.
- Reflect all communities in the promotion of and engagement with our culture, heritage and local history collections.
- Recognise and promote reading & library use as an essential element in peoples improved mental health and wellbeing.
- Provide opportunities for agencies and partners to work to address poverty & employability initiatives.

7.4 The service will work towards ensuring the following outcomes and impacts:

- People will be able to increase their knowledge/skills having used the library.

- People will be able to take part in reading and other cultural events organised by the library of their choice.
- People will feel part of a community using the library service.
- People will be able to take advantage of the opportunities of the digital world through using the library.
- People will be able to re-engage with reading and visiting the library as a pleasurable leisure activity.
- Personal health and well-being will be enhanced by using the library.
- People can participate more fully in local affairs via the facilities in the library

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

8.1 The main findings of the Equality and Socio-economic Duty Impact Assessment are that the Library Service Strategy and Action Plan 2022/25 will have a positive effect and will ensure that libraries:

- Promote inclusivity and diversity.
- Provide a wide range of services to meet the needs of groups that have protected characteristics including access to materials and resources in a range of languages and formats (e.g. braille).
- Improve access to learning and employability support to enhance opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to achieve their potential.
- Facilitate a wide range of cultural and other activities that will promote community cohesion.

Additional consideration will be given to:

- The promotion of libraries as safe spaces for women fleeing from domestic violence and women wishing to breast feed.
- Exploring opportunities to work with Young Carers and Young Carers projects.
- Assessing the potential of providing spaces for individual prayer to widen engagement with people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds.

The full assessment can be seen [HERE](#)

9. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been completed and the main findings are that there would be a positive outcome as the proposals outlined in the strategy would create:

- Better opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language by offering greater access to the Welsh language via IT, increased opportunities for volunteering for Welsh language activities and increased numbers of Welsh language sessions being offered within the library service.
- Increased numbers of Welsh speakers via recruitment or upskilling of staff.
- Provide additional opportunities to promote the Welsh Language via the Schools Library service where the new Wales school curriculum and the addition of a Welsh speaking staff member will provide increased opportunities to engage with Welsh Primary Schools.
- Continued opportunities to develop a culture where staff consider the Welsh Language in any work-related decisions and work closely with the Welsh Language Compliance and Policy Officer.

The full impact assessment can be seen [HERE](#)

10. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

10.1 The draft strategy reflects learning gained from the Customer Satisfaction Survey undertaken by the service in 2019 and informal feedback from customers and partners provided to library staff that is fed back through the branch librarians during management and branch meetings that review our services.

10.2 Feedback on the draft strategy and action plan has been provided by the Community Development team and the Arts Service that are closely involved in developments related to community hubs and expansion of the cultural offer within libraries.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

11.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report. The Library Service is core funded by the Council. However, it applies for external funding to deliver additional activities and to invest in its premises whenever the opportunity arises.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

12.1 The Library Service is a statutory service and governed by the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. This places a duty on Library Authorities to provide 'a comprehensive and efficient library service'. The duty to superintend and promote the improvement of public library services has been devolved to the Welsh Government. Since 2002 the performance of all public library services in Wales have been assessed against the Welsh Public Library Standards.

12.2 The proposed Strategy and Action Plan is designed to ensure that RCT Library Service continues to meet all 12 core entitlements which form part of the Welsh Public Library Standards and to support continuous improvement of the service's performance against the Quality Indicators.

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

13.1 The proposal strategy aligns with each of the 3 Council Corporate Priorities:

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

13.2 Libraries contribute to each of the 7 Well-being Goals by:

- Providing access to a world of lifelong learning through books and online information, free access to the internet and the delivery and facilitation of learning opportunities for people of all ages.
- Encouraging personal development and offering a range of services and activities that promote social and economic resilience.
- Working with partners to support wellbeing and reduce social isolation including providing information to support individuals to make informed choices and supporting the Book Prescription Scheme.
- Providing safe and inclusive facilities and offering support to those who are socially disadvantaged to access provision within their communities that will improve their prospects.
- Providing places where people can meet and connect with each other and with the services they need locally, including through the development of local hubs.
- Encouraging and promoting cultural activities for all ages, preserving local collections that safeguard local heritage and ensuring access to materials, and activities in the Welsh language.

- Making efficient use of resources, recycling materials, and working with MALD and other library services in Wales to develop the All-Wales Library Management system and implement good practice that reduces impact on the environment.

13.3 This draft Strategy and Action Plan will continue to place libraries at the heart of their communities and further enhance their contribution to the Council's early intervention and prevention agenda. The service already works in partnership with a wide variety of organisations – public sector, third and voluntary sector, and private sector enterprises. However, the pandemic limited the opportunity to deliver services and customers and many partners proved reluctant to resume normal activities while Wales lived under restrictions. Covid also had an impact on the way some customers preferred to access library services and resulted in new customers being attracted to digital resources and online provision. The lessons learned from Covid, and the feedback provided by residents, has influenced the draft Strategy and Action Plan and this will make the service more resilient and able to support the resilience of individuals and communities in a rapidly changing environment.

14. CONCLUSION

14.1 Library authorities are required to produce a Strategy and Action Plan that will outline the direction of travel for their service and to reflect how they will work towards meeting the core entitlements and quality indicators outlined in the Welsh Government's Sixth Quality Framework for libraries.

14.2 There have been some significant developments and progress made during the past 2 years despite the challenges of providing services during the Covid pandemic. However, the reduction in footfall due to lack of confidence among key groups to return to their previous level of usage is likely to continue for longer than previously anticipated and the proposed strategy for 2022/25 has a focus on further enhancing provision and ensuring access to a wider range of support through collaboration with partner organisations, to attract people to our venues.

14.3 The pandemic has demonstrated that library customers want to borrow and read digital formats and that they expect to borrow these items as easily as they can print formats. These expectations will require us to transition to a service that offers both traditional and digital collections to our customers. The shift to a more blended service will undoubtedly throw up challenges as we look to accommodate both traditional and digital customers within existing budgets.

14.4 If approved the Library Service will work with colleagues in Design and Print to develop an attractive document with photographs that will showcase the investment made in library premises and facilities since 2019 and highlight the

range of activities that customers have engaged in as well as the plans for the next 3 years. This will then be placed on the Council's website.

Other Information:

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Public Service Delivery, Community and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21st MARCH 2022

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR - PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION, AND COMMUNITY
SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CLLR. RHYS LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER
FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND COMMUNITIES**

RCT LIBRARY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2022/25

Officer to contact:

Wendy Edwards – Service Director, Public Protection - 07557082875

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 1 – Progress Against the 2019/21 Action Plan

The pandemic had a major impact on library provision in 2020/21 but despite there were some significant achievements as identified in the table below:

Action Plan 2019/21 – Evaluation

Theme	What we wanted to achieve.	What we achieved
Keeping the service relevant in a rapidly changing environment	Improved and up-to-date digital and computer equipment available at all libraries in RCT.	<p>Public access PCs were renewed at all branches in 2021.</p> <p>Large interactive screens suitable for training or holding meetings online have been placed in community meeting rooms at Pontypridd, Ferndale, Porth, Rhydyfelin and Mountain Ash Libraries</p> <p>Self-service machines have been installed in all libraries. Where possible these have been situated to allow use out of normal library hours.</p> <p>MFD photocopiers and scanners have been installed in all libraries</p> <p>All staff have been given access to Teams for virtual meetings and staff training sessions. In a service such as ours with locations spread over the County Borough this will reduce travel and increase contact between managers and staff.</p> <p>Senior managers issued with laptops to aid remote working and to give opportunities for remote access with both staff and public. (This has been used for meetings, training sessions, remote interviews etc).</p>
	More access to a wider range of electronic resources.	<p>The provision of electronic resources is one area that has benefitted from the Covid-19 pandemic due to an inevitable surge in the use of digital technologies due to social distancing and lockdowns. In effect the Library Service became a virtual service almost overnight and had to quickly adjust to new ways of working and delivering services. These changes highlighted the fact that there is an appetite for digital services with a significant increase in users and items borrowed being seen.</p> <p>The increased appetite for digital services and in particular e-books and e-audiobooks led to significant investment in these areas. With funding coming from Welsh Government and a realignment of our book budget to increase the amounts being spent on e-resources</p> <p>As well as investing in our existing e-book and e-audiobook platform Borrowbox we have also taken out a subscription to another e-resource platform (Ulverscroft) to increase availability and choice for our customers.</p> <p>People now have the option of becoming digital members of the library by joining online. Digital</p>

		<p>membership provides access to all our digital content and digital members wishing to borrow physical items can upgrade to full membership by providing ID at one of our libraries. Digital content includes access to a large collection of e-books and e-audiobooks containing a wide selection of titles including Welsh language titles. The number of people borrowing e-books and e-audiobooks has increased greatly during the Covid-19 pandemic as can be seen by the following table.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">Total loans</th> </tr> <tr> <th>April & May 2019</th> <th>April & May 2020</th> <th>Variance</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>69,528</td> <td>145,736</td> <td>110%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">Active users</th> </tr> <tr> <th>May-19</th> <th>May-20</th> <th>Variance</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>8,144</td> <td>16,088</td> <td>98%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>During the Covid-19 pandemic a temporary 'Order and Collect' service was introduced where library members could order books online or by telephone for collection from a library of their choice. This service has proven to be popular with library members appreciating the book selections made by staff and so the service is to be retained.</p>	Total loans			April & May 2019	April & May 2020	Variance	69,528	145,736	110%	Active users			May-19	May-20	Variance	8,144	16,088	98%
Total loans																				
April & May 2019	April & May 2020	Variance																		
69,528	145,736	110%																		
Active users																				
May-19	May-20	Variance																		
8,144	16,088	98%																		
	<p>Improved use of social media platforms for promoting the service to current customers and new customers.</p> <p>Work with the Council's marketing team to promote the Library Services online resources.</p>	<p>Prior to the Covid pandemic our use of social media via our Library Facebook page had showed a slow but steady increase as we continued to expand our promotion of library materials and events as well as providing service updates and information. However, during the pandemic we had to rapidly adapt to dealing with an online audience and increasingly made use of social media to share information related to Covid-19, communicate changes to the library service and to promote available library resources. This increased usage can be seen in the following table</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Month</th> <th>Facebook followers</th> <th>People viewing content</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>April 2020</td> <td>580</td> <td>6300</td> </tr> <tr> <td>April 2021</td> <td>969</td> <td>11,600</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Further improvements in this area could be made if other social media platforms such as Instagram were made available to the service.</p>	Month	Facebook followers	People viewing content	April 2020	580	6300	April 2021	969	11,600									
Month	Facebook followers	People viewing content																		
April 2020	580	6300																		
April 2021	969	11,600																		

		<p>The Schools and Children’s service have utilised Facebook to provide (with publisher consent) on-line storytelling and craft sessions, these have temporarily replaced physical sessions in libraries. Going forward a blended approach using both physical sessions and online sessions is planned. All relevant stories and posts are shared with the council’s marketing team for inclusion on the council’s Twitter feed, website, and news feeds.</p>
	<p>Digitisation of collections and development of an appropriate platform to enable 24/7 accessibility to online resources</p>	<p>The digitisation of local history materials has continued throughout this period and both our ‘Photographic Archive’ and ‘Our Past’ websites have had additional material added to them. The rate at which digitisation has occurred has been affected by the Covid pandemic with our digitisation officer not being able to carry out this work from home. Funding to develop an appropriate platform has been acquired via a successful bid to the National Heritage Lottery Fund with this being part of the larger ‘Altered Images’ heritage project. One of the project purposes for Altered Images is to merge the library service’s existing heritage websites to create one all-encompassing website that showcases, records, preserves and promotes the culture, history, and heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf. Thereby making the collections more accessible and attracting more and a wider range of people online.</p>
	<p>More digital programmes and activities for children and young people at RCT libraries.</p>	<p>Staff from the Schools and Children’s service were able to access a digital training package thanks to a grant from the Welsh Government’s Cultural Recovery Fund. This ‘Estyn Allen’ project involved technical training in the use of basic equipment and software apps as well as providing funding for authorities to invest in the basic hardware and software needed to produce good quality activities and content.</p> <p>The skills, equipment and software gained from participating in this project has allowed staff to produce on-line storytelling and craft sessions and tie in videos for events such as how to bake a chocolate cake (Roald Dahl Day) and how to make Welsh Cakes (St David’s day). In addition to this our Teenage Librarian established an on-line reading group. All these activities have proven to be popular and although they were introduced as a means of engaging with children and young adults during Covid restrictions we will look to take a blended approach going forward with a mix of physical and digital activities.</p>

<p>Embedding new models of service delivery</p>	<p>A successful and well-used mobile library service that offers a range of services and is accessed by customers of all ages.</p>	<p>Of the all the services we offer the mobile library service has been hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic due to the restricted space available on a mobile library and the need for social distancing to be observed. Mobile services were suspended as of March 2020 and are yet to be re-instated making it impossible to make any progress in developing this service. Instead, we have worked to expand our At Home service by restructuring the current service and incorporating the Mobile staff and vehicles into the service to expand the number of visits available. This has allowed us to incorporate many of the mobile library members into this service as well as opening the service to vulnerable people affected by the pandemic.</p>
	<p>A @homelibraryservice that supports customers to access books in a variety of formats that meet their needs.</p>	<p>Prior to the disruption caused by Covid the service continued to develop with staff piloting a tablet loan service whereby tablets with pre-loaded digital e-books/e-audiobooks were delivered to @home library members. Unfortunately, this was cut short due to the Covid pandemic but will resume as soon as conditions allow.</p> <p>During the pandemic after an initial period where the service was temporarily withdrawn, we were able to reintroduce the service due to the appropriate use of PPE and the introduction of Covid safe delivery guidelines. The service has continued to operate since its reintroduction and expanded during lockdown, offering a service to people who were shielding or identified as vulnerable as part of the local response to the pandemic. Use was also made of Mobile Library staff and vehicles to expand the service further to include deliveries to mobile library members whose service had been withdrawn due to covid restrictions.</p>
	<p>Well-used libraries at the heart of their communities co-located with other services and partners in community hubs at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ferndale • Mountain Ash • Porth • Pontypridd (Taf Vale) 	<p>The co-location of libraries with other services in line with the Council's development of community hubs that provide a range of services has been successfully completed during the timeframe of this strategic plan with community hubs that contain libraries being established at the following sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountain Ash (Canolfan Pennar) and Ferndale - Ferndale Hwb) – 2019 • Porth (Porth Plaza) and Pontypridd (Llys Cadwyn) – 2020 • Treorchy (Cultural hub in partnership with the Park and Dare Theatre) – 2021 <p>Investment from the Council and successful bids to MALD for Transformation Capital Grants have</p>

		<p>allowed us to create modern and well-equipped libraries at each site that are well suited to serve their local communities.</p> <p>Although the Covid pandemic has disrupted the process of building a customer base for these locations' initial data from Ferndale and Mountain Ash libraries that opened prior to the pandemic show a significant increase in use and in the number and range of activities and events being offered from these sites.</p> <p>The One4all service which provides a face-to-face information service for the council was transferred into the Library Service in April 2020. The timing of the move and the disruption caused by Covid-19 has not allowed any real analysis of how this service can best fit into the library service to take place and this is something that we hope to achieve during the period of the next Library Strategy.</p>
Improving the library experience for customers	All library buildings to be attractive and suitable for the needs of the communities that they service.	<p>Prior to the period covered by this strategy a number of successful bids to MALD for Transformation Capital Grants had resulted in the overall condition of our libraries being raised to a good level. The good work previously carried out has been built upon during the period of this strategy with the development of the Hub model for service delivery leading to significant investment in libraries situated within community hubs. This includes the installation of Adult Changing Places at Canolfan Pennar, Llys Cadwyn and Porth that ensures improved access to people with disabilities.</p> <p>All libraries have benefitted from investment to IT facilities which has allowed all our public access pcs to be renewed, self-service kiosks to be introduced and remote printing facilities made available. We also use our annual budget to maintain libraries to ensure that they are attractive, welcoming, and fit for purpose and make improvements where possible. Example of this would be the significant improvement made to facilities at Tonypandy library and the creation of a small community meeting room at Hirwaun which allows private One-to-One meetings to take place</p>
	More access to learning opportunities for all ages.	<p>The ability to develop access to learning opportunities has been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Face to face groups and classes have been suspended for long periods and when reintroduced only available for limited numbers. However, the foundations for developing greater access to learning opportunities have been created during this period with more community rooms, IT</p>

		<p>suites and better connections with learning providers being developed thanks to the community hub model of service delivery. In libraries at Ferndale and Mountain Ash where these improvements were introduced prior to the Covid-19 pandemic access to learning opportunities increased with 11 additional opportunities per month being created at Ferndale Library and an additional 15 per month at Mountain Ash.</p> <p>During the pandemic the library service has looked to develop learning opportunities online by creating online story and craft sessions, increasing the range and number of educational stock available via our digital e-book/e-audiobook platform, and promoting other library online resources such as Libby (e-magazine platform with over 3,000 titles), Ancestry and Transparent Language Online.</p> <p>It is hoped that once services return to normal, we can take advantage of the foundations laid down during Covid, both physical and digital, to provide more access to learning opportunities.</p>
	<p>Well -developed Reader Development Programmes for all ages</p>	<p>The library service has a number of reader development programmes in place including Bookstart for children under three years of age, the Summer Reading Challenge and various Book Clubs, for example English Language, Welsh Language, Teen, Visually Impaired, Sci-Fi and Manga. In addition to this we organise and hold regular in-house story time sessions at libraries throughout RCT. Again, many of these were disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic but we were able to deliver story time sessions and book clubs online and the Summer Reading Challenge was hosted fully online in 2020 and a hybrid version was held in 2021.</p> <p>Our Schools Library Service provides registered schools with project collections on a wide range of subjects and reader collections which allow classes to read the same book.</p>
	<p>Programmes of cultural activities developed with other partners.</p>	<p>The Library Service works with a wide range of people, groups, organisations, and other council departments to develop cultural activities. These include one off exhibitions, annual events, and larger grant funded projects. Examples of these include: Three Welsh Language sessions were held at Aberdare and Pontypridd libraries as part of Owain Glyndwr day on the 16th September 2019. Paintings by the Ystradyfodwg Arts Society are regularly displayed at Treorchy Library.</p> <p>The Library Service produces an annual anthology of poetry and prose by local writers and launch/performance events are held each year to showcase</p>

		<p>the work included in the anthology. (2021 no events held due to Covid 19). Other annual events include activities to promote national initiatives such as 'World Book Day' and 'Libraries Week'.</p> <p>The Library Service was successful with a bid for funding from Carnegie UK as part of their Engaging Libraries project. Our project was entitled 'The Fake News Immunity project' and we engaged with members of the public on the creation of a Fake News booklet, a short film based on community conversations about Fake News and we also worked with a local school to produce a local History booklet that explored local Fake News stories from the past to discover whether they were true or fake</p> <p>As a NLHF Priority Area RCT received a solicited invitation to apply to the NLHF for grant funding towards a project of our selection that would look to rebuild capacity within Rhondda Cynon Taf and the community in relation to heritage. The project that was developed as a result of this approach - 'Altered Images' - was approved in August 2021. It has been allocated £250,000 and will last for 3 years. and will look at the theme of Altered Images – How views of the past change over time and how understanding the past can challenge our assumptions about where we come from and how our communities developed. The Library Service will be leading on the delivery of this project working closely with the Heritage and Arts Service and local communities.</p>
	<p>Well-qualified and skilled staff able to offer advice and support on a wide range of issues</p>	<p>We work hard to identify opportunities to provide staff with training including in-house training and free training offered by suppliers or external organisations. Funding for two staff to undertake a professional qualification via distance learning has been provided and two staff are currently enrolled at Aberystwyth University. We support any staff member who wishes to improve their Welsh language skills by paying course fees or allowing time away from work. Library staff also undertake training which is relevant to developments in their work or to specific projects recent examples of this include Census Support training and use of the Order & Collect' module. Recent events and in particular the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of good digital skills and two staff were enrolled in the Estyn Allen project which involved technical training in the use of basic equipment and software apps.</p>
	<p>Good use made of volunteers to add capacity to the service</p>	<p>Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic the library service offered a number of volunteer opportunities primarily in the form of work placements, including</p>

		<p>long term placements for people with learning disabilities, and a small number of identified roles being offered out to volunteers such as assisting in the digitisation of materials from the local history collection. Young adults from our e-teens library regularly assist with library activities such as story time sessions and special events. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic and to ensure the safety of staff and volunteers, a temporary suspension of library volunteers has been enforced.</p> <p>During Covid however as part of the development of Community Resilience Hubs established to provide residents with support, library staff contributed to the coordination of Community Resilience Volunteers who delivered food and medication to vulnerable people on the Shielded Patients List.</p>
--	--	---

Appendix 2

RHONDDA CYNON TAF LIBRARY SERVICE DRAFT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2022-25

STATUTORY DUTIES OF LIBRARIES IN THE UK

Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons'.

The Act does not specify how local authorities should ensure they deliver a modern and efficient library service that meets the needs of their communities except that they should:

- have regard to encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service
- lend books and other printed material free of charge to those who live, work or study in the area

In Wales the duty 'to superintend and promote the improvement of the public library service provided through local authorities' has been devolved to the relevant Welsh Minister and since 2002 this duty has been fulfilled through the Welsh Public Library Standards.

These standards consist of 12 core entitlements and 15 Quality Indicators.

An annual assessment is undertaken of the performance of each Library Service in Wales against the WPLS. Due to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of public libraries during the National Lockdown, no assessment was undertaken in 2020/21. However, in 2019/20 Rhondda Cynon Taf's Library Service met all 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 9 quality indicators which have targets, Rhondda Cynon Taf achieved 5 in full, 1 in part and failed to achieve 3. The full WPLS Assessment Report can be found on the Welsh Government website.

THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT 2015

The long-term aim of the Welsh Government is to build a Wales that is prosperous and secure, healthy and active, ambitious and learning, and united and connected.

The Well-being Goals from the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) Act 2015 are:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language
- A globally responsible Wales

Libraries contribute to each of the 7 Well-being Goals by:

- providing access to a world of lifelong learning through books and online information, free access to the internet and the delivery and facilitation of learning opportunities for people of all ages
- encouraging personal development and offering a range of services and activities that promote social and economic resilience

- working with partners to support wellbeing and reduce social isolation including providing information to support individuals to make informed choices and supporting the Book Prescription Scheme
- providing safe and inclusive facilities, and offering support to those who are socially disadvantaged to access provision within their communities that will improve their prospects
- providing places where people can meet and connect with each other and with the services they need locally, including through the development of local hubs
- encouraging and promoting cultural activities for all ages, preserving local collections that safeguard local heritage and ensuring access to materials, and activities in the Welsh language
- making efficient use of resources, recycling materials, and working with MALD and other library services in Wales to develop the All-Wales Library Management system and implement good practice that reduces impact on the environment.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF'S CORPORATE PLAN

The Library Service contributes to the priorities identified in the Council's Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 'Making a Difference':

- 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

LIBRARIES CONNECTED – UNIVERSAL LIBRARY OFFERS

The Library Service is guided in everything it does by themes identified by the Welsh Government in its Sixth Quality Framework – 'Connected and Ambitious Libraries' that outlines the following Universal Offers:

HEALTH & WELLBEING: Healthier, Happier, Connected - To support the health and wellbeing of local people and communities through services that inform, engage and connect.

INFORMATION & DIGITAL: Inform, Inspire, Innovate - To ensure local communities have access to quality information and digital services, to learn new skills and to feel safe online.

READING: Engage, Imagine, Discover - To build a literate and confident society by developing, delivering and promoting creative reading activities in libraries.

CULTURE & CREATIVITY: Explore, Create, Participate - To enable local communities to access and participate in a variety of quality and diverse arts and cultural experiences through local libraries.

VISION

Our vision for Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries is to support all individuals and communities to achieve their full potential.

LIBRARY SERVICES IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

Despite pressures on local authority finances across Wales, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has maintained a mixed model of delivery that includes:

- 3 Area Libraries.
- 10 Branch Libraries
- Mobile provision including the @homelibraryservice for residents who are unable to use static libraries
- A Schools Library Service that offers a loan and advisory service to all primary schools.
- A Children and Youth Librarian that develops programmes and activities that promotes reading and information literacy among young people.
- E-books, e-audiobooks and e-magazines available online at all times to all residents.
- Local studies collections at Aberdare, Pontypridd and Treorchy libraries.
- Online access to local studies materials and photographic collections.
- Delivery of the Council's face-to-face 'One4all' information service
- Access to community meeting spaces and digital technology

The development of community hubs from 2019 has added another dimension to the Library Service and enhanced the offer to residents. The following libraries are currently co-located with other Council services and/or partner organisations:

- Porth
- Mountain Ash (Canolfan Pennar)
- Ferndale (Yr Hwb)
- Church Village (Garth Olwg Lifelong Learning Centre)
- Llantrisant (co-located with the Leisure Centre)
- Pontypridd (Llys Cadwyn)
- Treorchy (Arts Service/Park and Dare theatre)

In addition, in April 2020 the Council's One4All information and advice service was merged with the Library Service. This service operates from the following library/hub buildings:

- Treorchy
- Aberdare
- Llys Cadwyn
- Canolfan Pennar (Mountain Ash)
- Pontyclun

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

Covid- 19 had a major impact on library provision in 2020-21. The major negative impact was the requirement for services to close during the National Lockdown and during the Local Lockdown in Rhondda Cynon Taf. On-going restrictions as Wales passed through different Alert Levels continued to have a negative effect on the footfall in libraries, although conversely, there was a significant increase in the number of people downloading e-books and e-audiobooks.

Library services adapted quickly to the challenges and provision, such as story-telling and craft sessions for children, transferred online while the development of an 'Order and Collect Service' for books has been extremely popular and enabled libraries to provide services from the end of June 2020 onwards in line with public health regulations.

Mobile library provision was suspended during this period to protect staff and customers as the vehicles were unable to meet social distancing requirements, and there was a need for staff in other areas of the service and elsewhere in the Council to provide resident support. However, additional resources were provided to the @homelibraryservice for residents unable to leave their homes to access books – this has been crucial for the wellbeing of the most vulnerable residents.

It was during this period of lockdown that Community Hubs and the support co-ordinated from library bases locally had the greatest impact on resident health and wellbeing.

It is difficult at this time to assess the longer-term impact of the pandemic, but it is recognised that there will be some customers who still lack confidence in visiting their local libraries and hubs and this may continue for a longer period than anticipated.

KEY PRIORITIES

The financial pressures experienced by local authorities in recent years and those imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in the library service reviewing every aspect of its offer to ensure that it:

- remains relevant in an increasingly technological age
- provides access to the range of opportunities and support required by residents
- embraces change and adopts an innovative approach to problem-solving to ensure the service is fit for purpose for the longer term

The focus going forward will be on:

- keeping the service relevant in a rapidly changing environment
- improving the library experience for all customers
- taking the opportunities and lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic to inform and shape future provision

The following will underpin all developments:

- Engagement with communities to understand their needs
- A commitment to listening to voices of community members who are seldom heard
- Work with partners to ensure that customers have the range of provision they require
- Ensuring that libraries/hubs remain at the heart of local communities
- Providing services and resources in Welsh and English

To achieve these priorities, the service will:

- further enhance the programme of digitisation of resources and make these available online so that customers can access collections at any time
- harness new IT developments to improve the customer experience
- ensure that all staff have the skills required to provide a service that remains relevant at a time when innovations in technology and changing patterns of usage are having an impact on how customers want to engage with the service
- embed new models of delivery and monitor customer feedback to ensure they achieve their objectives
- build on online delivery of services to children identified during Covid-19 pandemic to strengthen, expand, and increase the reach of these services to families across RCT
- ensure that residents have access to a broad range of learning opportunities
- work with partners to provide a wider range of information, advice, and support on well-being and health
- work with partners and volunteers in the heritage, arts and cultural sectors to develop a range of cultural activities
- recognise and promote reading & library use as an essential element in peoples improved mental health and wellbeing
- blend traditional and digital services by developing a Digital strategy for libraries
- reflect all communities in the promotion of and engagement with our culture, heritage and local history collections
- Support the further development of community hubs working in partnership with Neighbourhood Network partners.
- Provide opportunities for agencies and partners to work together to address poverty & facilitate employability initiatives

OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

- People will be able to increase their knowledge/skills having used the library

- People will be able to take part in reading and other cultural events organised by the library of their choice
- People will feel part of a community using the library service
- People will be able to take advantage of the opportunities of the digital world through using the library
- People will be able to re-engage with reading and visiting the library as a pleasurable leisure activity
- Personal health and well-being will be enhanced by using the library
- People can participate more fully in local affairs via the facilities in the library

LIBRARY STATISTICS

Physical visits			
2018 – 2019	2019 – 2020	2020 – 2021	2021 – January 2022
727,922	712,686 (up to 20/03/20)	11,952	284,145

Virtual visits			
2018 – 2019	2019 – 2020	2020 – 2021	2021 – December 31st 2021
114,966	147,601	177,525	112,915

Physical Items borrowed			
2018 – 2019	2019 – 2020	2020 – 2021	2021 – January 2022
434,404	535,281	98,737	185,227

Digital Items borrowed			
2018 – 2019	2019 – 2020	2020 – 2021	2021 – January 2022
30,309	48,330	88,289	N/A

Active members

2018 – 2019	2019 – 2020	2020 – 2021	2021 – January 2022
13,948	18,632	22,981	12,797



what our customers say

'You have valuable resources that, in this time of increasing family research being made, deserve all the recognition they can get.'

'I honestly can't thank the library service enough for the support I've had in my role, and I can't praise enough the work that goes on to support community and voluntary groups.'

'I have like many others had a difficult lonely life during the present restrictions. The click and collect system in our library was a godsend and much appreciated.'

The staff couldn't do enough for me, they were both helping me chose some appropriate books to take home. The kids loved them. I then returned to see what else we could try, and the staff suggested audio books, what a hit!!!! the kids loved these too.

'A big thanks to the library staff for delivering a fabulous service during these strange times'

'I appreciate the services provided greatly and my 6-year-old son has progressed very well with his reading since I joined the library'

APPENDIX 3: LIBRARY SERVICE ACTION PLAN 2022-25

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
Keeping the service relevant in a rapidly changing environment	Improved and up-to-date digital and computer equipment available at all libraries	<p>Identify new technologies to meet new customer's needs. For example, the use of VR equipment.</p> <p>Optimise the use of our existing ICT provision to build upon recent enhancements. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring ways to promote and enhance the use of interactive screens in IT suites to increase usage and improve the customer experience. • Create a library home page for use on all public access pcs to promote library online resources and allow quicker 	<p>Information Services Librarian to lead with nominated staff</p> <p>Principal librarian with nominated staff. Branch library staff to be responsible for front line promotion and development of identified opportunities and projects.</p>	<p>Number of library users that provide positive feedback on the use of digital and computer technologies.</p> <p>Increase in number of library members attending IT related classes and in the use of the interactive screens.</p>	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		<p>access to these resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in partnership to deliver IT training opportunities including current digital courses such as apps, tablets, and virtual reality. • Greater use of tablets in Static Libraries and services such as the '@home service'. • Extend use of the Library Management System by making greater use of existing functionality. For example, use of SMS and emails to contact library members. 			

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		Identify and apply for relevant external funding as appropriate.	Principal Librarian and nominated staff		
	More access to a wider range of electronic resources	<p>Identify and evaluate new online resources that reflect users' current needs. For example, 'online newspaper collection'.</p> <p>Continue to promote and encourage customer use of the 'Pori' library app.</p> <p>Continue to work with MALD and the Society of Chief Librarians to identify potential All Wales resources.</p> <p>Continue to work with the Society of Chief Librarians on the creation of an All-Wales Library Card.</p>	<p>Principal Librarian and Information Services Librarian</p> <p>Frontline staff and Area Librarian</p> <p>Principal Librarian</p> <p>Principal librarian</p>	<p>Increased usage of electronic resources.</p> <p>Number of people downloading and using the 'Pori' app.</p>	
	Improve use of social media platforms for promotions	All library staff to participate in the creation of digital content.	Library staff	Increase in the number of in-house produced digital content	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		<p>Create and develop digital content to improve customer engagement and access to online resources building upon the technical training provide by the Estyn Allen project.</p> <p>Explore the possibility of library use of other social media platforms and in particular Instagram.</p>	<p>Library staff who have undergone Estyn Allen training.</p> <p>Area Librarian</p>	<p>Number of visitors to Library Social media</p> <p>Number of library posts on social media</p>	
	Creation of an integrated Digital platform to enable 24/7 accessibility to digital content	<p>Work with specialist organisations as part of the 'Altered Images' project to facilitate the creation of an all-encompassing website that showcases, records, preserves and promotes the culture, history, and heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf.</p> <p>Work with MALD and SCL to explore the development of an All-</p>	<p>Principal Librarian, Information Services Librarian, Project coordinator and other members of the project board.</p> <p>Principal librarian</p>	Number of visitors to newly created platform.	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		<p>Wales digital resources' platform.</p> <p>Review Council services to ensure people who are digitally excluded retain access to these services.</p>	Principal Librarian		
	More digital programmes and activities for children and young people in RCT libraries	<p>Relaunch Code club and work to expand provision to other branches throughout the authority.</p> <p>Explore the use of new technologies such as VR headsets to engage children and young people in library events.</p>	Information Services Librarian and Children Services Librarian	<p>Number of code clubs.</p> <p>Number of children participating in code clubs</p>	
Improving the library experience for customers.	Community Hubs	<p>Continue to develop library services within Community hubs to improve and extend the advice, information, and services available.</p> <p>Work with the Community Services team to reach out to network partners to improve the visibility of Library services and</p>	<p>Principal Librarian and nominated staff</p> <p>Area Librarian and front-line staff.</p>	<p>Number of visitors</p> <p>Number of partners/organisations offering sessions.</p> <p>Number of exhibitions and cultural activities held at Treorchy Library.</p>	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		<p>engage with groups that are seldom heard.</p> <p>Work in partnership with the community and the Park and Dare to develop and embed the new cultural hub at Treorchy Library. Working together to organise, promote and run a series of cultural events, including Welsh language events.</p> <p>Support the 'Ageing Well Wales Plan' by introducing initiatives that remove barriers to access by older people.</p> <p>Work with the Community Development Team specialist Officer Older Persons advisory Groups, to achieve Age Friendly Status for RCT Neighbourhoods.</p> <p>Promote the use of Welsh in libraries using</p>	<p>Area Librarian and Treorchy Library branch librarian.</p> <p>Area librarian and nominated staff.</p>	<p>Neighbourhoods achieve Age Friendly status.</p>	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		<p>lanyards, posters and the Council's 'Buddy Scheme.</p> <p>Monitor Welsh provision across the service to identify gaps in the service. Take steps to resolve identified gaps via upskilling and recruitment.</p>			
	More access to learning opportunities for all ages	<p>Work with Digital Communities Wales and facilitate digital inclusion initiatives to support people to get online.</p> <p>Work with partners to offer basic skills courses including ESOL and Welsh classes.</p> <p>Work with partners to maintain a programme of Digital literacy support such as Digital Fridays and Job Clubs.</p> <p>Facilitate a range of formal and informal learning opportunities</p>	Principal librarian and nominated staff.	<p>Number of people accessing learning opportunities.</p> <p>Number of volunteers and volunteering hours.</p> <p>Number of schools expressing satisfaction with the SLS.</p>	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		<p>that will enhance the well-being of customers.</p> <p>Offer volunteering opportunities, providing each person with a meaningful volunteering experience to make them more job ready.</p> <p>The School Library Service to source new titles and resources that reflect the needs of the new Wales school curriculum.</p>	Children Services Librarian		
	Greater access to information and advice services within libraries.	<p>Embed One4all service into the library service to make greatest possible use of available resources.</p> <p>Work with partners to provide information and advice at our libraries on matters such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational programmes • Employment support • Welfare benefits 	Principal Librarian and nominated staff. Area Librarian	<p>Number of customers accessing the One4all service</p> <p>Number of people attending information and advice sessions</p> <p>Number of Reading Well loans</p>	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and Well-being <p>Promote and support the 'Reading Well Scheme' by developing book collections that support the health and wellbeing of targeted groups.</p>			
	Cultural activities	<p>Encourage staff to support more reading groups within libraries and the wider communities. Explore the possibility of establishing 'Reading Friends' groups.</p> <p>Promote the Summer Reading Challenge and increase participation and number of children completing the challenge.</p> <p>Work to develop programmes outside of core opening hours.</p>	<p>Area Librarian and branch librarians</p> <p>Children Services Librarian</p> <p>Principal Librarian and Area Librarian</p>	<p>Number of reading groups.</p> <p>Number of 'Reading Friends' groups</p> <p>Number of children taking part in the SRC reaches the all-Wales median.</p> <p>Number of out of hours sessions</p>	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		<p>Work with the project coordinator and partners to achieve all of the aims and objectives set out in the NHLF project 'Altered Images'.</p> <p>Work with partners, providing free space in libraries for cultural events including exhibitions, local history talks, author events and events linked to national or local campaigns. e.g. World Book Day.</p>	<p>Principal Librarian, Information Services Librarian, Project coordinator and other members of the project board.</p> <p>Branch Librarians</p>		
	Well qualified and skilled staff.	<p>Seek funding and opportunities that enables staff to develop the skills and knowledge required in a modern library service.</p> <p>Continue to support staff wishing to pursue formal qualifications.</p> <p>Provide BSL training for staff so that they can</p>	Principal Librarian	<p>Number of staff training hours.</p> <p>Number of Welsh Language speakers in service.</p>	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		<p>engage with people who have hearing difficulties</p> <p>Adhere to Welsh language standards by supporting Welsh language learning and recruiting Welsh speakers where service demands dictate.</p> <p>Review the current staffing structure to ensure potential career pathways.</p>			
Take the opportunities and lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic to inform and shape future provision	Attracting new and diverse audiences.	<p>Build upon the success of the delivery of digital content achieved during the covid-19 pandemic. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating and developing our own digital content such as story time and craft sessions. • Encouraging the development of online groups including book 	<p>Principal Librarian and Children Services Librarian</p> <p>Information Services Librarian, Area Librarian and Teenage Librarian</p>	<p>Number of online sessions</p> <p>Numbers of online groups</p>	

Themes	Objective	Actions	Responsible	Performance indicator	Comments
		<p>clubs and reading groups.</p> <p>Review our stock policy to create a more relevant blend of digital and traditional resources adjust book budget expenditure accordingly.</p> <p>Review the current policy of charging fines for overdue books.</p> <p>Review room hire charges for those organisations required to pay.</p>	<p>Principal Librarian and Area Librarian</p> <p>Principal Librarian</p> <p>Area Librarian</p>		



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21 MARCH 2022

DIGITAL STRATEGY 2022-2026

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & DIGITAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE & DIGITAL SERVICES (CLLR MARK NORRIS)

Author(s): Tim Jones Service Director, ICT & Digital
Gareth Pearce, Head of Technology
James Vale, Head of Digital Transformation

1. **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to set out the Council's updated Digital Strategy for the period 2022 to 2026.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider and, if appropriate approve the Council's updated Digital Strategy (set out at Appendix A).

3. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To ensure the Council continues to fully exploit the opportunities provided by 'digital' to meet the changing needs of customers and communities and support the on-going delivery of efficient and effective services.

4. **BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 To ensure the Council is well placed to take maximum advantage of a continually expanding digital world, Cabinet agreed the Council's first Digital Strategy at its meeting on 22nd June 2017 [Report Link](#) and on the 21st June 2018 agreed a Digital Work Programme to support on-going delivery of the Strategy [Report Link](#).

4.2 Since this time, regular updates have been reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees to enable elected Members to review and challenge progress against the Digital Strategy:

- Overview & Scrutiny at its meeting on 5th February 2019 received and considered a report on the Digital Work Programme and acknowledged the adequacy of progress against the programme actions, alongside the governance arrangements that were in place [Report Link](#).
- Cabinet at its meeting on 17th October 2019 received and considered a report on progress against the work programme and agreed the requirement to bring forward a new Digital Strategy [Report Link](#).
- The Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 16th December 2019 considered a report and presentation on the Council's Digital Strategy 2017-20, its work programme progress and provided observations and comments to inform the development of a new Digital Strategy [Report Link](#). In early 2020 our services and communities faced unprecedented challenges with the impact of Storm Dennis and the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic, and whilst the intention was to develop a new strategy for 2020-2024, our focus was diverted to the immediate and critical priorities which were presented.
- The Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 15th March 2021 received a presentation on the crucial role digitalisation played in supporting service transformation during Storm Dennis and the pandemic and agreed that a new proposed Digital Strategy be brought forward to a future Committee for consideration [Report Link](#).

4.3 It is considered that the work undertaken since the inception of the first Digital Strategy in June 2017 has made a positive difference to the delivery of Council services, this position being consistent with feedback from Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees. Progress includes:

- Increasing self-service and online transactions via the Council's website, examples being putting Covid-19 related business grant applications online, streamlining customer and back-office processes, enabling quicker decisions and speedy payments to RCT businesses during the pandemic.
- Enabling agile & flexible working to allow staff to effectively work from home and within the Community – minimising the impact on service delivery during the pandemic.

- Implemented free WiFi to over 90 Community & Council office buildings and key Town Centres to make it easier for people to get online.
 - Delivered the 'Hwb' digital transformation programme to all schools providing new improved infrastructure and WiFi, ensuring schools are well placed to deliver upon the new curriculum for Wales.
 - Provided over 5,500 laptops, tablets and WiFi access to School learners to support the digitally excluded.
 - Enabled greater community access to political process and decision making through e-democracy.
 - Supported digital inclusion and improvement of skills within the community via continued work with partners to support delivery of Digital Fridays and a device loaning scheme.
- 4.4 The Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 30th November 2021, pre-scrutinised the draft Digital Strategy 2022-2026. Members discussed the strategy and comments were received in respect of fibre broadband and broadband “not spots,” Schools HWB Digital transformation, Community WiFi and Cyber Security.
- 4.5 Members agreed that the proposed Digital Strategy effectively set out the vision and the objectives to maximise the opportunities of ‘digital’ for our communities, our customers and for the Council [Minutes Link](#).

5. THE COUNCIL’S PROPOSED DIGITAL STRATEGY 2022-2026

- 5.1 The proposed Digital Strategy 2022-2026 seeks to build upon the progress made since 2017 and sets out our vision of being a truly “Digitally Driven Council,” that provides excellent services, which are efficient, effective and designed with the person and modern customer expectations at their heart and delivered by a digitally empowered workforce.
- 5.2 The Strategy reflects the ever-increasing role and reliance on digital in people’s everyday lives and seeks to harness the transformative impact it has. It also recognises that whilst demand continues to rise for online services, there are some who will continue to need our help to access digital services and those who need to be supported through more traditional channels.
- 5.3 Our strategy will be delivered through four thematic workstream areas:
- Digital Solutions and Service Design
 - Data Insight and Intelligence
 - Digital Infrastructure
 - Digital Skills, Learning & Inclusion

5.4 The workstreams are underpinned by a set of overarching and guiding digital principles that will be applied to our approach as set out below:

- Proactively seek to prioritise the digital improvements that deliver the most impact and benefit.
- Create an organisational culture allowing digital to thrive and encourage active challenge of the status quo.
- Undertake a “Council First” approach to digital delivery and services, further enable cross-service thinking and ensure we avoid duplication to maximise our digital outcomes.
- Develop creative digital solutions for business problems that meet clearly defined requirements and targeted measurable outcomes using appropriate project delivery frameworks and partners when required.
- Embrace digital technology and practices seeking to maximise potential as part of our organisational planning and trigger business process change.
- Seek to leverage our data insights and data intelligence to inform efficient decision making.
- Maximise our return on investment, using where possible our existing digital applications and utilising in-house digital skills.
- Support access to intuitive digital services, that are easy to use and leave no-one behind.
- Openly share knowledge, good practice, collaborate and the sharing of solutions wherever possible.
- Reduce our carbon footprint through the implementation of digital solutions, supporting our ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- Deliver solutions optimised for accessibility, the Welsh language and to meet Welsh public sector design standards.
- Deliver compliant solutions in line with legislation, such as Local Government Elections Act and GDPR.
- Deploy and maintain scalable, robust, secure and cyber resilient high performing platforms.

5.5 To deliver our ambitions, we will also need to ensure close alignment between our digital, workforce, asset management and medium term financial plan, alongside continuing to harness the positive cultural change seen during the pandemic to quickly adopt and embrace digital opportunities.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 To ensure that we meet the requirements of equality, diversity and the socio-economic duty, we have undertaken an Impact Assessment (Appendix B) to assess the effects of the Digital Strategy on these areas.
- 6.2 The Digital Strategy will support protected groups who choose to access digital services and allow people to participate fully as digital citizens / staff and members. The Digital Work Programme deliverables will be built on user-centred design principles and where possible developed to be bilingual and fully accessible, which will support equality and accessibility.
- 6.3 The Council's corporate website provides a high-level of accessibility rating and its supporting tools ensure strong levels of accessibility. Work will continue to improve our accessibility ratings. We will take further steps to mitigate negative impacts by ensuring initiatives (for example free public access PCs, devices loaning, connectivity and confidence/skills support) form part of the Digital Work Programme to reduce barriers.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 To ensure that we meet the requirements of the Measure, we have undertaken a Welsh Language Impact Assessment (Appendix C) to assess the effects of the Digital Strategy on the Welsh language.
- 7.2 The Digital Strategy will support people who choose to access digital services through the medium of Welsh and allow people to participate fully as digital citizens / staff and members. The Digital Work Programme deliverables will be built on user-centred design principles and where possible developed to be bilingual and fully accessible, which will support the use of the Welsh language.
- 7.3 It should be noted that the digital marketplace does not always allow for the procurement of fully compliant bilingual solutions, however this will always be stated as a requirement and should we need to procure a solution that is not fully compliant, we will work with vendors to improve, lobby for change and consider alternative options e.g. software that replaces text in real-time.

8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1 To inform the development of the strategy, a number of engagement activities were carried out, including Officer and Member consultation

alongside community research and engagement with wider key organisations such as Digital Communities Wales.

- 8.2 The proposed Digital Strategy at Appendix A has been pre-scrutinised by the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 There are no financial implications aligned directly to this report. Digitisation is a key contributor to the delivery of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

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

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

- 11.1 The proposed Digital Strategy 2022-2026 impacts on the community and all Council services and in doing so contributes to the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan. The proposed Strategy also ensures the Council complies with its legal duty under the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015.

- 11.2 Our strategy reflects the ever-increasing role and reliance on digital in people's everyday lives and harnesses the transformative impact it has. It recognises that whilst demand continues to rise for online services, there are some who will continue to need our help to access digital services supported through areas such as skills, devices or better connectivity. By providing this support we can open-up a new world of opportunities aligned to our Corporate Plan 2020-24 – 'Making a Difference' that sets out our priorities that will help us to achieve our Council's vision. ***"To be the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy, and prosperous."***

- 11.3 This proposed Strategy embraces the direction set by the Well-being of Future Generations Act that sets out Wales' ambition for a prosperous, resilient, sustainable, healthier, more equal Wales, with cohesive communities, a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. These seven goals alongside applying the five sustainable development principles of long term, preventative, involvement, integration and collaboration provides the strategic direction for the development of digitally enabled services. Appendix I of the proposed Digital Strategy

provides examples of how we will contribute to the seven well-being goals.

- 11.4 This proposed Strategy aligns to the national vision for adopting a digital approach across Wales. The Welsh Government's Digital Strategy for Wales and the Welsh Local Government Digital Strategy and Delivery Plan were published in 2021.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 The Council's new Digital Strategy 2022-2026 articulates our medium-term vision, setting a clear direction of travel and framework within which our digital ambitions can be taken forward over the next four years.

Other Information:-

Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer – Tim Jones – Service Director for ICT & Digital

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21 MARCH 2022

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & DIGITAL SERVICES IN
DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE &
DIGITAL SERVICES (CLLR MARK NORRIS)**

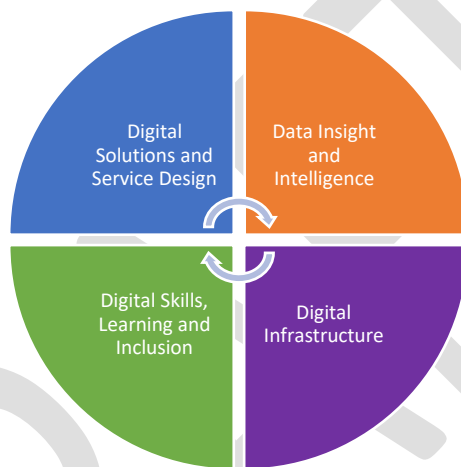
**Item:
Background Papers**

Contact Officer – Tim Jones – Service Director for ICT & Digital

DIGITAL RCT

OUR DIGITAL STRATEGY

2022 - 2026



ARLOESI RHCT
LLYWIO TRAWSFFURFIAD DIGIDOL



INNOVATE RCT
DRIVING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION



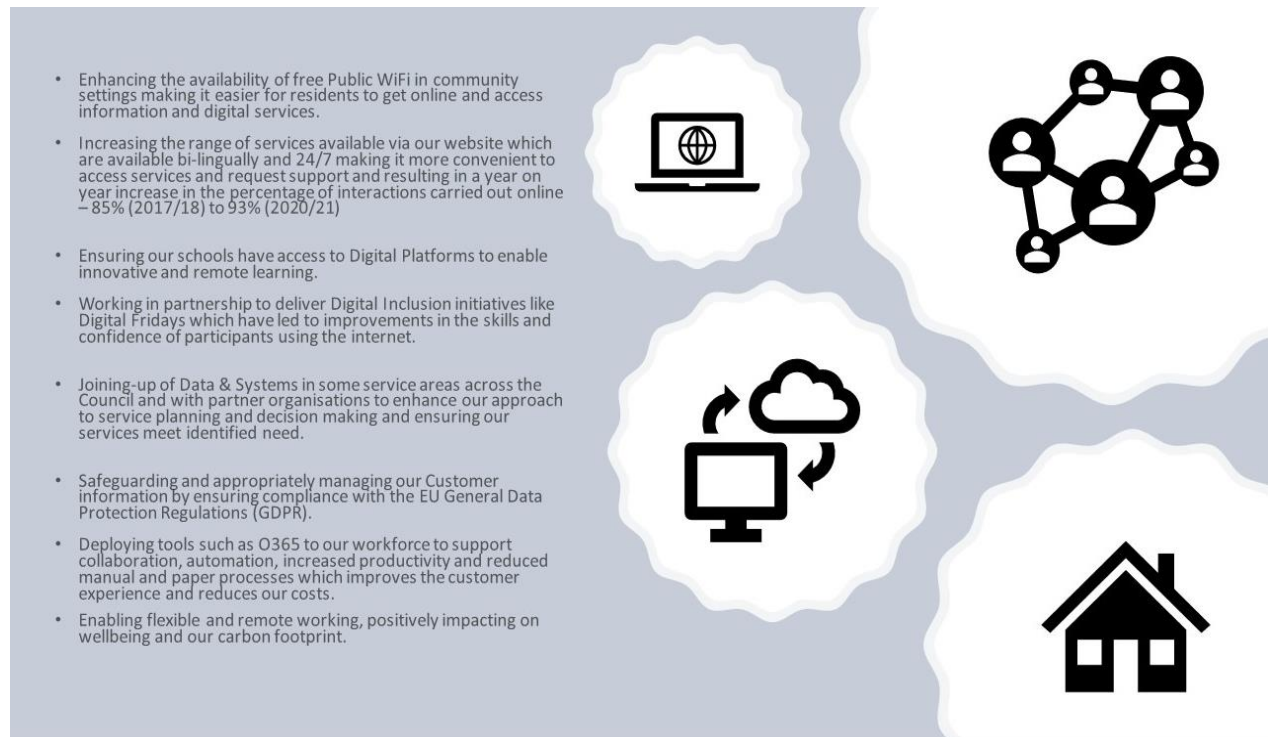
Digital RCT - OUR DIGITAL STRATEGY 2022 – 2026

Table of Contents

	Page
Our Digital Journey – Introduction & Context	3
Our Vision, Strategic Aims & Guiding Principles	7
Driving Digital – Our Enabling Themes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Digital Solutions and Service Design• Data Insight and Intelligence• Digital Infrastructure• Digital Skills, Learning & Inclusion	8
Key Measures	13
Governance	14
Appendix I - How our Digital Strategy contributes to the seven national Well-being goals	15
Appendix II – Day in the life stories to describe how digital solutions and their outcomes can improve lives	16

OUR DIGITAL JOURNEY - INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT

In 2017 we launched our first Digital Strategy. The strategy was underpinned by the key thematic areas of Resident, Workplace, Business, Visitor and Skills and achieved several positive outcomes of significance such as:



- Enhancing the availability of free Public WiFi in community settings making it easier for residents to get online and access information and digital services.
- Increasing the range of services available via our website which are available bi-lingually and 24/7 making it more convenient to access services and request support and resulting in a year on year increase in the percentage of interactions carried out online – 85% (2017/18) to 93% (2020/21)
- Ensuring our schools have access to Digital Platforms to enable innovative and remote learning.
- Working in partnership to deliver Digital Inclusion initiatives like Digital Fridays which have led to improvements in the skills and confidence of participants using the internet.
- Joining-up of Data & Systems in some service areas across the Council and with partner organisations to enhance our approach to service planning and decision making and ensuring our services meet identified need.
- Safeguarding and appropriately managing our Customer information by ensuring compliance with the EU General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).
- Deploying tools such as O365 to our workforce to support collaboration, automation, increased productivity and reduced manual and paper processes which improves the customer experience and reduces our costs.
- Enabling flexible and remote working, positively impacting on wellbeing and our carbon footprint.

Our initial strategy took us through to March 2020 and whilst the intention was to develop a new strategy for 2020-2024, the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that our focus was diverted to the immediate and critical priorities which the pandemic presented.

Our services and communities have faced unprecedented challenges during recent times, however the delivery of our 2017-2020 digital strategy meant that the Council was well placed to continue delivering key services and to also establish new digitally enabled services as part of the Council's response to the pandemic.

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.

As part of the Welsh Government’s ‘Hwb’ digital Transformation Project, we made sure that every school was 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.

The resultant change in the ways of working, greater collaboration and the adoption of new digital solutions ensured organisational continuity and the timely provision of crucial services to our communities. The reliance upon ICT & Digital Services has advanced to levels never seen before and throughout 2020/2021 we saw a remarkable and exceptional increase in the demand for digital services. This demand and dependency will only increase into the future.

The following illustration demonstrates further examples of digitalisation upto and including 2021.

We have continued to deliver digital improvements and support residents to access key services....

ARLOESI RHGT
AMRODWR GWELLA DIGIDOL
INNOVATE RCT

- Kept Council business and decision making going during the pandemic through the delivery of 132 virtual and hybrid committee meetings.
- Our website has been accessed nearly 6 million times helping people access services, news and information.
www.rctcbc.gov.uk
- Refreshed our Digital Infrastructure - 50 Cloud enabled business systems leading to improved resilience & scalability.
- Dealt with over 200,000 waste, recycling, transport and street related requests received online, contributing towards a cleaner and greener Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- Provisioned over 3000 staff with digital tools and ICT equipment to enable effective home working, minimising disruption to services to residents and keeping staff connected.
- Installed free Cloud Wi-Fi in over 50 Council & Community sites making it easier for residents to get online in their local area.
- Processed over 55,000 requests made online for Covid-19 related support ensuring residents and businesses who needed help received it.
- Worked with partners to deliver Digital Friday sessions to over 400 people and loaned out over 150 devices to help improve digital skills and confidence and support access to employment.
- Continued to work with providers to progress the roll out of SuperFast Broadband to all properties in RCT.
- The Cloud

In the context of the emerging “new normal” we have developed our 2022-2026 Digital Strategy which provides a framework that will enable us to build on our progress and further capitalise on the integral and transformational role that digital has played throughout the pandemic.

Our strategy reflects the ever-increasing role and reliance on digital in people’s everyday lives and harnesses the transformative impact it has. It recognises that whilst demand continues to rise for online services, there are some who will continue to need

our help to access digital services supported through areas such as skills, devices or better connectivity. By providing this support we can open-up a new world of opportunities aligned to our Corporate Plan 2020-24 – Making a Difference that sets out our priorities that will help us to achieve our Council’s vision. ***“To be the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy, and prosperous.”***

The Digital landscape in Wales has gained real momentum in recent times and our strategy aligns to the national vision for adopting a digital approach across Wales. The Digital Strategy for Wales was published in 2021 and we have seen the appointment of a Chief Digital Officer for Local Government and the launch of the Centre for Digital Public Services (CDPS) in Wales, who have in turn developed digital services standards and promoted a Government Digital Service (GDS) approach. All of which have positively influenced this strategy. We will aim to capitalise on all of these developments and collaborative opportunities, as well as maximising our strategic partnerships such as the Cardiff Capital Regional City Deal and Northern Valleys Economic plans.

This strategy embraces the direction set by the Well-being of Future Generations Act that sets out Wales’s ambition for a prosperous, resilient, sustainable, healthier, more equal Wales, with cohesive communities, a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. These seven goals alongside applying the five sustainable development principles of long term, preventative, involvement, integration and collaboration provides us strategic direction for the development of digitally enabled services.

See Appendix A for examples of how our Digital Strategy will contribute to the seven well-being goals.

ABOUT THE DIGITAL STRATEGY 2022-2026

Our Digital Strategy 2022-2026 sets out what we are going to do over the next period to achieve our vision and maximise the benefits of digital for our **COMMUNITIES**, our **CUSTOMERS** (residents, businesses, staff, learners, elected members and visitors) and for us as a **COUNCIL**.

The strategy is also supported by a separate document outlining our digital ambitions for our Schools “Digital RCT – Our Digital Strategy for Schools.”

A set of key principles will inform the way we work, and the delivery of our strategy will be underpinned by four thematic workstream areas:

- Digital Solutions and Service Design
- Data Insight and Intelligence
- Digital Infrastructure
- Digital Skills, Learning & Inclusion

A Digital Work Programme will be defined to cover each of these thematic workstreams, and an established Strategic Digital Delivery Board will play a key role in informing and influencing our policy and direction alongside challenging progress to ensure deliverables are met. The work programme will be defined over an initial 12–18-month term and then refreshed throughout the full term of this strategy.* This is in recognition of the significant pace of change in relation to the digital landscape and our ability to leverage future digital technology. The programme will be regularly revisited and reevaluated to ensure that our deliverables continue to be the right ones to realise our goals and aspirations.

It is recognised that our work programme alone will not fully deliver our ambition and we will need to also align our technology, people, medium term financial and asset plans to maximise digital outcomes. Moving forward, our digitally enabled new ways of working will help us build greater resilience to better manage our future challenges.

In addition, cultural change will need to be at the forefront of our planning, and we must continue to harness the positive appetite seen during the pandemic to quickly adopt and embrace digital opportunities.

The strategy development has been informed by a wide range of stakeholders that has included elected members, citizens and officers.

***Note:** Detailed digital work programme in development.

OUR VISION, STRATEGIC AIMS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our Digital Strategy will aim to better enable a more efficient and effective organisation, one that challenges everything we do to see if we can do it better and continually seeks to maximise the resources, we have available.

This strategy seeks to put in place our vision of being a truly “**Digitally Driven Council**” that provides excellent services which are resilient and secure and designed with the person and modern customer expectations at their heart, which are delivered by a digitally empowered workforce.

A set of overarching and guiding digital principles will be applied to our approach. These **PRINCIPLES** will underpin the delivery of our vision.

We will:

- Proactively seek to prioritise the digital improvements that deliver the most impact and benefit.
- Create an organisational culture allowing digital to thrive and encourage active challenge of the status quo.
- Undertake a “Council First” approach to digital delivery and services, further enable cross-service thinking and ensure we avoid duplication to maximise our digital outcomes.
- Develop creative digital solutions for business problems that meet clearly defined requirements and targeted measurable outcomes using appropriate project delivery frameworks and partners when required.
- Embrace digital technology and practices seeking to maximise potential as part of our organisational planning and trigger business process change.
- Seek to leverage our data insights and data intelligence to inform efficient decision making.
- Maximise our return on investment, using where possible our existing digital applications and utilising in-house digital skills.
- Support access to intuitive digital services, that are easy to use and leave no-one behind.
- Collaborate wherever possible to openly share knowledge, good practice and solutions.
- Reduce our carbon footprint through the implementation of digital solutions, supporting our ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- Deliver solutions optimised for accessibility, the Welsh language and to meet Welsh public sector design standards.
- Deliver compliant solutions in line with legislation, such as Local Government Elections Act and GDPR.
- Deploy and maintain scalable, robust, secure and cyber resilient high performing platforms.

DRIVING DIGITAL: OUR FOUR THEMATIC WORKSTREAMS

The following four thematic workstreams will enable us to deliver on our digital ambitions:

Digital Solutions and Service Design



Digital services will be designed to meet the needs of the customer. We will review and redesign our current processes as required, ensuring that service processes are “Driven by Digital” offerings, are customer informed, simplified and enables the evolving needs of our customers. Access to digital services is key to Council priorities and will promote independence, wellbeing, positively impact on economic growth and improve the digital experience.

Data Insight and Intelligence



We will strive to obtain the maximum value from our data, ensuring our decision making is informed from robust analysis and using data driven approaches to transform our Council services. Business Intelligence reporting dashboards will enable visualisations of information, optimised through the preparation of cleansed, aggregated and complex data sets, to perform advanced data analysis that better inform and influence outcomes as we bring together different views of our customers.

Digital Skills, Learning & Inclusion



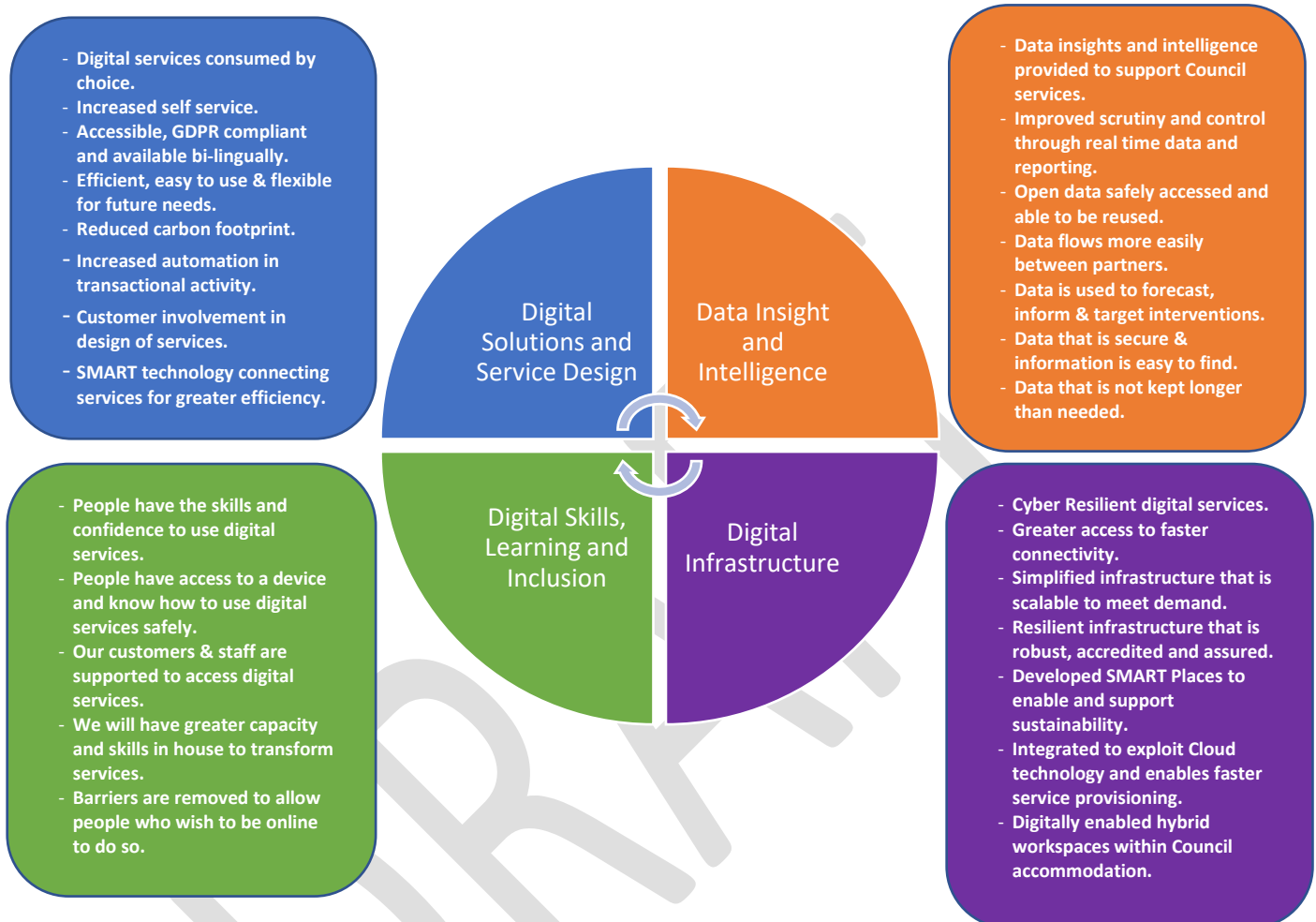
We will provide opportunities for people within our communities and organisation to develop their digital competency and confidence and provide access to assisted digital support, so that they are better equipped to access and use technology productively. We will support all to become more confident to safely use technology and effectively adopt new ways of doing things.

Digital Infrastructure



We will harness new and emerging technologies to underpin the redesign of public services in a way which meets the changing needs of services, staff and our communities. Digital Transformation can only be delivered if built upon modern, secure, resilient and scalable infrastructure and fast connectivity that enables end to end customer service and the needs of a modern mobile workforce.

We must deliver against all four of our enabling thematic workstreams as together they provide the collective which will enable our customers, communities and the council as an organisation to maximise the opportunities of digital. The following illustration and also Appendix B “A Day in the Life,” articulates **thematic workstream outcomes** which will be realised through the delivery of our strategy.





Workstream 1: Digital Solutions and Service Design

By the end of 2026 we will have:

- Delivered more effective and efficient services that are designed 'end to end' and digitised, increased self-service, introduced greater automated workflow and reduced the administrative burden.
- All council services that are appropriate to be made available online, are available online; are accessible bilingually to all 24/7/365 and have better user experiences.
- Ensured that new council processes are enabled digital by default.
- Explored and deployed emergent technology such as Internet of Things (IOT), chatbots, robotic process automation and artificial intelligence where there is a benefit.
- Created a culture whereby the opportunities of service redesign & digital and adoption of new ways of working are embraced.
- Contributed to becoming a Carbon Neutral Council by 2030 by reducing the need to travel to access services, transact and by digitising paper processes.
- Ensure that new digital services are developed to be bilingual and fully accessible.
- Improved the user experience through online Self Service portals for Customers, Elected Members and Staff through the provision of an account and single point of access to transact with the Council, that in turn provides integrated access to all council related customer accounts e.g. Leisure, Libraries, Council Tax.
- Enabled greater community access to political process and decision making through e-democracy.
- Ensured Council accommodation can be managed more smartly, solutions integrated, and staff can seamlessly access facilities and easily book desks/collaborative work spaces.
- Provided assisted digital support to support anyone who may need help to use an online service..
- Continued to implement solutions across the Council to enable all officers & members to work effectively, efficiently, securely and safely irrespective of location (Home, Agile and Office).



Workstream 2: Data Insight and Intelligence

By the end of 2026 we will have:

- Leveraged relevant Council information to gain useful actionable insight from our rich data sources that better inform decisions.
- Enabled a common approach to council wide reporting, data dashboards and visualisations of data that are automatically updated and in near real time.
- Gained a holistic knowledge of the data needed to support the delivery of the various services provided by the Authority. This panoramic view offering

significant opportunities to identify cross-cutting service and data themes for analysis and insight development.

- Drawn data from new sources such as SMART technology and Internet of Things (IOT) sensors to further inform strategic priorities such as independent living, decarbonisation, our environment including flood prevention.
- Built artificial intelligence and machine learning into business processes to create intelligent workflows to automate decisions.
- Become a data driven Council and used artificial intelligence and data science to our benefit.
- Focused our resources to prioritise and utilise insights, analytics and forecasting and move away from historic reporting. Challenged existing reporting outputs and refocus on what most matters.
- Created capacity and expertise in the effective use and management of data analytics to inform organisational priorities.
- Enabled greater information sharing and collaboration both internally and externally to the Council. Openly share and publish appropriate non-personal data, in accessible forms so that it may be re-used and create new opportunities.
- Established data standards to ensure a consistent organisational approach across the Council, that data is of a high quality and fidelity and ensured our insights are based on the most reliable data.
- Continued to ensure that data is secure and appropriately accessible.



Workstream 3: Digital Skills, Learning & Inclusion

By the end of 2026 we will have:

- Ensured people are more digitally confident and able to make the most of the opportunities that digital brings, should they choose a digital channel.
- Promoted a culture that fosters greater digital inclusion through learning & upskilling, continuing to engage with our residents to understand barriers and how we can best support them to be digitally included.
- Ensured learners have better access to devices in school settings and that the use of HWB and digital learning is increased.
- Provided our workforce with the opportunity to increase their digital skills and supported them to use technology to work more flexibly, effectively and efficiently.
- Provided customers with support to self-serve via an assisted digital approach, ensuring advisor support is available for people and more complex queries.
- Ensure digital skills, learning and inclusion activities are offered to meet demand through the medium of Welsh.
- Ensure that our Digital, Data and Technology staff are professionally developed to effectively support delivery.

- Fostered an approach of developing key frontline workers as digital champions to digitally assist citizens or signpost for further support.
- Worked collaboratively with County Borough partners to better coordinate and maximise our activities to overcome barriers to digital inclusion.
- Supported the delivery of a Digital Strategy for our Schools with the vision to provide: *“Equality of Access and provision for all learners across the County Borough supporting excellence and high achievement in a creative, exciting and technologically rich environment, delivering success, valuing diversity, raising self-esteem and promoting lifelong learning skills and attitudes.”*
- Ensured our residents, have supported access to devices, should they need one; and we support their use of them.
- Developed greater awareness of how users can better protect themselves when accessing digital services and transacting online.



Workstream 4: Digital Infrastructure

By 2026 we will have:

- Managed the digital switchover with minimal impact on service delivery and maximised the associated benefits.
- Exploited infrastructure and technology driven solutions to create sustainable, more efficient Smart buildings and County Borough.
- Further improved our Cyber resilience and maintained required accreditation to ensure our data and assets are better protected from cyber threats.
- Developed a cultural awareness of Cyber Security to enhance the protection of our data and assets and ensure they are protected from cyber threats.
- Maximised the use of our existing tools and opportunities to build solutions before committing to buying new systems, software, applications etc. to deliver best value for money.
- Developed digitally enabled Council accommodation workspaces to better enable our hybrid workforce.
- Worked with strategic partners (e.g. Cardiff City Region, Northern Valleys Regeneration, BT Open Reach, Welsh Government) to increase access to faster broadband and light up current “not spots” areas throughout the County Borough.*
- Investigated the requirements and need for 5G connectivity and consider how this can be implemented in the Borough.
- Improved the resilience, availability and scalability of our Council & School digital infrastructure, where appropriate provisioning them through a cloud platform to provide greater assurance to its availability 24/7/365.
- Improved County Borough connectivity for residents & businesses, reduced ‘not spots’ and increased access to Full Fibre, Faster mobile broadband speeds.

***Note:** as at February 2022, of 122,556 premises, 99.25% can achieve above 24mbps speeds, 98.76% above or equal to 30mbps and 22.41% can access Full Fibre (FTTP).

KEY MEASURES

THEME	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Digital Solution and Service Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % Digital Customer Interactions - % Digital Business Interactions - % Customer Digital Satisfaction Rate - % services available digitally vs offline - Number of key business processes / Services redesigned to provide “end to end” Digital Services - % Staff ICT & Digital Service Satisfaction Rate
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % Residents able to receive Superfast Broadband – reducing the “Not Spot” Areas. - % Residents able to receive Full Fibre Broadband. - % Tier1 ICT & Digital Systems/Services in the Cloud. - % Availability of Tier1 ICT & Digital Systems/Services
Skills, Learning Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % Increase of Staff/Members Digital Competency - Device ratio for pupils - Number of resident beneficiaries from loaned devices
Data & Analytics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of service departments enabled with Business Intelligence Dashboards

GOVERNANCE

With this ambitious and challenging strategy in place, new approaches to thinking will be needed and key decisions made to deliver service improvements and transformation.

To oversee the delivery of this Strategy and its associated Digital Work Programme, a Strategic Digital Delivery Board will be formed that is championed by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services. The board will:-

- Provide the leadership and strategic direction to drive forward the Councils' Digital ambitions and priorities.
- Champion digital, technology and data across the Council, ensuring resources are deployed to achieve the maximum outcomes.
- Monitor and challenge progress of the Digital Work Programme to ensure deliverables are met.
- Act as a gateway for the strategic assessment and approval of future requested digital work proposals to ensure effective prioritisation.
- Oversee and guide the delivery of actions aligned to the strategy.

The Strategic Digital Delivery Board will ensure that progress reports against the Digital Work Programme will be provided to Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and the Senior Leadership Team.

Examples of how our Digital Strategy contributes to the seven national Well-being goals.

Appendix I

National Well-being Goal	Aligned Principles	Key Actions
Prosperous Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively seek to prioritise the key digital improvement solutions that deliver the most impact and benefit. Maximise our return on investment, using where possible our existing digital applications and utilising in-house digital skills. Seek to leverage our data insights and data intelligence to inform quick and efficient decision making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase access to faster broadband and light up current “not spots” areas throughout the County Borough. Improve skills through digital inclusion, guidance, upskilling and digital adoption schemes for residents and staff. A new Tourism website and digital bookings for events. Delivery of our Schools Digital Strategy.
Resilient Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an organisational culture allowing digital to thrive and encourage active challenge of the status quo. Deploy and maintain scalable, robust, secure and cyber resilient high performing platforms. Seek to leverage our data insights and data intelligence to inform quick and efficient decision making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered more effective and efficient services that are designed ‘end to end’ and digitised whereby developing more resilient organisation. Investment in ICT & Digital Services. Exploring the use of new technology to better enable sustain delivery into the longer term.
Healthier Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce our carbon footprint through the implementation of digital solutions, supporting our ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030. Seek to leverage our data insights and data intelligence to inform quick and efficient decision making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage the use of accurate and timely joined up data to support our residents more effectively. Regional and national activities to better integrate Health & Social Care Digital Systems. Exploit Internet of things (IOT) technology to improve areas such as assistive living, air quality and travel to our town centres.
More Equal Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support access to intuitive digital services, that are easy to use and leave no-one behind. Openly share knowledge, good practise, and the sharing of solutions wherever possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making sure that residents can access services, no matter what their background or circumstances. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solutions and services that are accessible. Schemes & Services for those residents who are digitally excluded. Providing opportunities to all our residents to improve their digital skills. Publishing Open Data so that it may be reused by all for benefit
Wales of Cohesive Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Openly share knowledge, good practise, and the sharing of solutions wherever possible. Seek to leverage our data insights and data intelligence to inform quick and efficient decision making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designing services that are built around the customer and the community. Services that help people to live independently within their community.
A Wales of Vibrant Culture & Welsh Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver solutions optimised for accessibility, the Welsh language and to meet design standards including the Centre for Digital Public Services (CDPS). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver solutions and services that are designed bilingually. Seek to deliver solutions that meet business requirements and provide an option of Welsh language selection
Globally Responsible Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce our carbon footprint through the implementation of digital solutions, supporting our ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploiting digital to better support decarbonisation, working in areas such as minimising need for staff journeys, optimise council fleet routes, reducing paper use, optimise datacentre efficiency, SMART buildings and more energy efficient technology. Exploit Internet of things (IOT) technology to improve monitoring of and impact to areas of environmental concern like flooding, air quality and volume of travel to our town centres.

Day in the Life as a Strategy Outcome

“A Day in the Life,” examples that articulates thematic workstream outcomes and describes how digital solutions can improve lives.



Workstream 1: Digital Solutions and Service Design

Mrs Evans (Age 72, Widow, Lives at Home)

Mrs Evans is an independent elderly lady with a “low vision” impairment that lives on her own and has never previously accessed services or support online. However she has recently bought an iPad to help keep in touch with family and friends during the pandemic and now wants to be able to do use it to access services and transact from the comfort of her own home.

Having received support from Digital Friday events previously to connect her device to the internet (through the use of full fibre broadband that has recently been rolled out in her village). She decides to attend again to learn how to sign up for a customer account and access services on the council’s website. During the Digital Friday session she is pleased to note that the website is designed in an accessible format, including features such as text resizing, meaning Mrs Evans can easily navigate around the site despite her low vision. She is supported to sign up for an account and in doing so she signs up to receive information which may be of interest to her.

One evening she receives a notification that the council’s Adult Education team are starting a Pilates course and follows the link to book and pay for the course via her account. Mrs Evans likes the fact the course is also streamed online giving her the option of participating at home if she wants to.

After completing the course Mrs Evans feels healthier and fitter and is now considering using her local leisure centre. She uses the membership calculator on the council’s website to input how many times a week she plans to visit the leisure centre and which activities she plans on undertaking. The calculator then provides her with information on which membership option provides her with the best value for money.

Mrs Evans’ digital skills and confidence have improved significantly over recent months and she now accesses a range of online services safely, securely and independently. However she would like help completing her leisure membership registration online so accesses the live chat facility on the council’s website where an advisor is able to take her through the sign up process using screen sharing tools.

As a Leisure4Life member she has the option of booking classes via her account and has the skills and confidence to do so. This gives her the flexibility to book at her convenience 24/7, wherever she is.

Mrs Evans now leads a much more active lifestyle and, when discussing the benefits of her new lifestyle to friends via video calls, has also supported some of them to sign up to courses and classes online.



Workstream 2: Data Insight and Intelligence

A Day in the Life - Officer Williams, Streetcare Manager

Officer Williams has recently been made responsible for cleaning up dog fouling issues throughout the County Borough. In order for her to understand where the issues are (reports of complaints), she accesses her data management dashboard that gives her a geographic view of where the worst hit areas currently exist. Through use of her management information system, she is able to allocate cases to her inspection officers whilst they are 'in the field', who are tasked with reviewing the worst affected areas in Pontypandy. The 'jobs' are accessed by the field officer through their staff mobile app, the location is pinpointed and displayed on a map through their mobile phone. Once the job is complete, the app allows the officer to send this information back to the Streetcare Manager, so she is able to quickly understand when the issues are resolved.

Through further interrogation of her analytics dashboards, Officer Williams believes there is an opportunity to optimise the locations of dog waste bins in Pontypandy Park. Officer Williams liaises with her Streetcare teams to revise locations.

By using data analytics to inform where the trouble areas are, and understand the reasons for the problems, Officer Williams was able to put a series of informed actions in place to eradicate the dog fouling issues in Pontypandy. Latest performance reports indicate dog fouling incidents have decreased by 70%.



Workstream 3: Digital Skills, Learning & Inclusion

A Day in the Life - Sophie, Student

Sophie is a fourteen-year-old pupil at a RCT Community School. She is studying biology as one of her GCSE subjects and would like to use her skills and knowledge with this subject for a job in the future. Historically she has had limited access to a laptop at home and uses her mobile phone for most of her research.

The school uses technology for supporting learning in some subjects but in the past sometimes resources have been limited. The school has benefited from the funding from the HWB Transformation Project. The funding has provided a significant number of additional laptops and tablet devices and improved WI-FI access throughout the school, including the outdoor learning areas.

Sophie really enjoys using the iPad to collect information out in the school environment and now that the school has outdoor WI-FI access, she can save her findings in her Office365 OneDrive for use later. When in class, Sophie can now access her data, findings and photographs on her Office365 OneDrive and is able to use this information quickly to complete her assignments.

Sophie feels that her use of digital allows her to enter the future jobs market with the skills relevant for the occupational opportunities she is seeking. Sophie uses the collaborative software everyday and has overcome a number of barriers with a digital approach to learning.



Workstream 4: Digital Infrastructure

A Day in the Life– Jim, Contact Centre Agent

Jim is a multi-skilled, multi-channel Customer Advisor in the Contact Centre. He no longer physically works in the contact centre all the time as the systems he requires access to are all cloud based and facilitate home working.

Jim logs in to the telephony platform and can see that this morning he is going to be dealing with live chats and social media queries. His first live chat of the day is a query that has been escalated from the council's chat bot. Jim can see that Customer A asked for and received information from the chat bot regarding their council tax balance and council tax discount. Jim can also see the customer was signposted to the online form for council tax discount but was unsure how to upload the required evidence which is why the chat bot escalated the chat to an Advisor.

Jim picks up the conversation via live chat without having to ask the customer to repeat any of the information already provided to the chat bot and provides some advice on the evidence the customer needs to provide. The customer is still unsure so Jim asks the customer to share their screen so Jim can check the evidence and successfully talks the customer through the upload process.

Before ending the call, Jim provides the customer with information about the customer portal and sends a link via text for the customer to complete the sign up process.

A week later, another advisor (Pam) receives a call from Customer A regarding their council tax reduction application. Via the CRM Pam can see the previous transactions Customer A has had with the chat bot and Jim regarding this query and is able to quickly summarise the current status of the application. Customer A explains that their circumstances have changed and Pam advises the application therefore needs to be updated. As Customer A has signed up to the Customer Portal Pam explains that the quickest way to update their details is via the portal which provides seamless access to Customer A's Council Tax account.

Two days later, Jim is allocated a social media post from Customer A thanking the team for their support and advising that the discount has been applied. Jim knows exactly what the customer is referring to and provides the appropriate response.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM INCLUDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

(Revised March 2021)

Please refer to the current Equality Impact Assessment guidance when completing this document. If you would like further guidance please contact the Diversity and Inclusion Team on 01443 444529.

An equality impact assessment **must** be undertaken at the outset of any proposal to ensure robust evidence is considered in decision making. This documentation will support the Council in making informed, effective and fair decisions whilst ensuring compliance with a range of relevant legislation, including:

- Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010.

This document will also contribute towards our duties to create a More Equal Wales within the

- Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015.

The [‘A More Equal Wales – Mapping Duties’](#) guide highlights the alignment of our duties in respect of the above-mentioned legislation.

SECTION 1 – PROPOSAL DETAILS

Lead Officer: Gareth Pearce

Service Director: Tim Jones

Service Area: ICT & Digital

Date: 8/February 2022

1.a) What are you assessing for impact?

Strategy/Plan	Service Re-Model/Discontinuation of Service	Policy/Procedure	Practice	Information/Position Statement
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.b) What is the name of the proposal?

ICT & Digital Strategy 2022-2026

1.c) Please provide an overview of the proposal providing any supporting links to reports or documents.

The Digital Strategy 2022-2026 seeks to put in place our vision of being a truly “Digitally Driven Council,” that provides excellent services, which are efficient, effective and designed with the person and modern customer expectations at their heart and delivered by a digitally empowered workforce. This Strategy replaces the previous Digital Strategy 2017.

Our strategy will be delivered through four thematic workstream areas:

- Digital Solutions and Service Design
- Data Insight and Intelligence
- Digital Infrastructure

- Digital Skills, Learning & Inclusion

1.d) Please outline where delivery of this proposal is affected by legislation or other drivers such as code of practice.

The Digital Strategy is clearly aligned to our Corporate Plan 2020-24 – Making a Difference that sets out our priorities that will help us to achieve our Council’s vision. “To be the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy, and prosperous.”

This strategy is affected by legislation in particular the Well-being of Future Generations Act that sets out Wales’s ambition for a prosperous, resilient, sustainable, healthier, more equal Wales, with cohesive communities, a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language, which also provides us strategic direction for the development of digitally enabled services.

Other areas of key legislation are:-

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1

Welsh Language Measure

Public Sector Network Code of Practice

UK General Data Protection Act

1.e) Please outline who this proposal affects:

- Service users
- Employees
- Wider community

SECTION 2 – SCREENING TEST – IS A FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT REQUIRED?

Screening is used to determine whether the initiative has positive, negative or neutral impacts upon protected groups. Where negative impacts are identified for protected groups then a full Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Please provide as much detail as possible of how the proposal will impact on the following groups, this may not necessarily be negative, but may impact on a group with a particular characteristic in a specific way.

Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and foster good relations between different groups. Please take an intersectional approach in recognising an individual may have more than one protected characteristic.

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Age (<i>Specific age groups i.e. young people or older people</i>)	Positive	<p>The Digital Strategy will support people who choose to access services and are then able to participate digitally.</p> <p>Ensuring new digital services are built on user-centred design principles, and that they are developed to be bilingual and fully accessible will help support equality. Digital Work Programme deliverables will consider the impact of equality as part of its acceptance, design and solution process. A Strategic Digital Delivery Board will act as the gatekeeper for digital project approval.</p> <p>If the Council failed to provide non-digital means of engaging with it, that could be to the detriment of those</p>	<p>Local User Research – Addressing Digital Exclusion. Welsh Government - Digital Inclusion Strategic Framework Welsh Government – Digital Inclusion a forward look Older Peoples Commission - Leave no one behind Wales Cooperative - Digital Inclusion, Exemplar Wales NESTA - What is Data Poverty? Council Staff Strategy Consultation National Wales Survey’s Office National Statistics</p> <p>Partner Engagement - Get RCTOnline Digital Communities Wales Centre Digital Public Service</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>people who do not have the skills or capabilities to engage online. The mitigation of this will include the retention/development of assisted digital approaches and, where necessary for those who cannot engage digitally, more traditional channels.</p> <p>We will take steps to mitigate negative impact by ensuring initiatives (for example free public access PCs, devices loaning, connectivity and confidence/skills support) form part of the Digital Work Programme to reduce any barriers.</p>	<p>Office of Chief Digital Officer Wales (LocGov) SOCITM Cymru</p> <p>The National Survey for Wales 2021-22 April to June shows that the percentage of people who do not use the internet has dropped from 23% in 2012/13 to 7% 2021/22. However, certain groups are overrepresented in this area, for example, only 36% of people over 75 have basic digital skills, compared with 87% of 16-49 year olds.</p> <p>Local User Research - research identified that the key barriers to becoming digitally included were: Access to an appropriate digital device, Basic Digital Skills and Connectivity. Digital Exclusion in these primary areas is</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<p>heightened for an age group of 75+</p> <p>Wider Sources</p> <p>What we mean by digital inclusion - NHS Digital 210513-lloyds-consumer-digital-index-2021-report.pdf (lloydsbank.com)</p> <p>ppp_digital-_inclusion_uk.pdf (ageuk.org.uk)</p>
<p>Disability (<i>people with visible and non-visible disabilities or long-term health conditions</i>)</p>	Positive	<p>The Digital Strategy will support people who choose to access services and are then able to participate digitally.</p> <p>Ensuring new digital services are built on user-centred design principles, and that they are developed to be bilingual and fully accessible will help support equality. Digital Work Programme deliverables will consider the impact of equality as part of its acceptance, design and solution process. A Strategic Digital Delivery Board will act as the</p>	<p>Local User Research – Addressing Digital Exclusion. Welsh Government - Digital Inclusion Strategic Framework</p> <p>Welsh Government – Digital Inclusion a forward look</p> <p>Older Peoples Commission - Leave no one behind</p> <p>Wales Cooperative - Digital Inclusion, Exemplar Wales</p> <p>NESTA - What is Data Poverty?</p> <p>Council Staff Strategy Consultation</p> <p>National Wales Survey's Office National Statistics</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>gatekeeper for digital project approval.</p> <p>The Councils corporate website provides a high level rating and supporting tools to ensure strong accessibility. Work will continue to improve accessibility.</p> <p>If the Council failed to provide non-digital means of engaging with it, that could be to the detriment of those people who do not have the skills or capabilities to engage online. The mitigation of this will include the retention/development of assisted digital approaches and, where necessary for those who cannot engage digitally, more traditional channels.</p> <p>We will take steps to mitigate negative impact by ensuring initiatives (for example free public access PCs, devices loaning, connectivity and confidence/skills support) form part of</p>	<p>Partner Engagement - Get RCTOnline Digital Communities Wales Centre Digital Public Service Office of Chief Digital Officer Wales (LocGov) SOCITM Cymru</p> <p>The Council corporate website accessibility rating is 91% with accessibility tools deployed to further support.</p> <p>The National Survey for Wales showed that 87% of people with a disability or long-term health condition use the internet compared with 93% of those without.</p> <p>Local User Research - research identified that 90% of people with a disability had access to a device and 87% had connectivity (4.6% cited connectivity could be</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		the Digital Work Programme to reduce any barriers.	improved). Key barriers to becoming digitally included were feelings of low confidence and it was complicated. Wider Sources What we mean by digital inclusion - NHS Digital 210513-lloyds-consumer-digital-index-2021-report.pdf (lloydsbank.com) ppp_digital-_inclusion_uk.pdf (ageuk.org.uk)
Gender Reassignment <i>(anybody who's gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex they were assigned at birth including non-binary identities)</i>	Positive	Our research has not identified any particular impacts for people on the basis of gender reassignment. However we believe that our focus on the ability to remove or accommodate non-forced entry of gender specific information like Title, Birth Names and Birth Gender where possible would have a positive impact.	Local User Research – Addressing Digital Exclusion. Welsh Government - Digital Inclusion Strategic Framework Welsh Government – Digital Inclusion a forward look Older Peoples Commission - Leave no one behind Wales Cooperative - Digital Inclusion, exemplars in Wales NESTA - What is Data Poverty? Council Staff Strategy Consultation

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<p>National Wales Survey's Office National Statistics</p> <p>Partner Engagement - Get RCTOnline Digital Communities Wales Centre Digital Public Service Office of Chief Digital Officer Wales (LocGov) SOCITM Cymru</p>
Marriage or Civil Partnership <i>(people who are married or in a civil partnership)</i>	Neutral	Our research has not identified any particular impacts for people on the basis of marriage or civil partnership.	As Above
Pregnancy and Maternity <i>(women who are pregnant/on maternity leave)</i>	Neutral	Our research has not identified any particular impacts impacts for people on the basis of pregnancy and maternity.	As Above
Race <i>(ethnic and racial groups i.e. minority ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers)</i>	Positive	Research shows that there maybe disproportionate impacts for ethnic and racial groups. In particular many Gypsies and Travellers experience digital exclusion. Gypsies and	Across the great divide:The impact of digital inequality on Scotland's Gypsy/Traveller children and young people

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		Travellers are less likely to use the internet regularly, less likely to possess digital skills and significantly less likely to have a household internet connection than the majority of the population. We will take steps to mitigate negative impact by ensuring initiatives (for example free public access PCs, devices loaning, connectivity and confidence/skills support) form part of the Digital Work Programme to reduce any barriers.	during the COVID-19 emergency Digital Exclusion in Gypsy and Traveller communities in the United Kingdom
Religion or Belief <i>(people with different religions and philosophical beliefs including people with no beliefs)</i>	Neutral	Our research has not identified any particular impacts for people on the basis of religion or belief.	As Above
Sex <i>(women and men, girls and boys)</i>	Neutral	Our research has not identified any particular impacts for people on the basis of sex.	As Above
Sexual Orientation <i>(bisexual, gay, lesbian, straight)</i>	Neutral	Our research has not identified any particular impacts for people on the basis of sexual orientation.	As Above

In addition, due to Council commitments made to the following groups of people we would like you to consider impacts upon them:

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Armed Forces Community <i>(anyone who is serving, has served, family members and the bereaved)</i>	Positive	During the pandemic we recognised there was a digital divide for some veterans within RCT. Working with the Armed Forces Community, we have supported inclusion by making tablet devices available via a project to allow veterans to get connected, access vital services and keep in touch with each other.	As Above
Carers <i>(anyone of any age who provides unpaid care)</i>	Neutral	Our research has not identified any particular impacts for people on the basis the carers community.	As Above

If the initial screening test has identified negative impacts then a full equality impact assessment (section 4) **must** be undertaken. However, if after undertaking the above screening test you determine a full equality impact assessment is not relevant please provide an adequate explanation below:

Are you happy you have sufficient evidence to justify your decision?

Yes

No

Name: Gareth Pearce

Position: Head of Technology

Date: 25/February/2022

Please forward a copy of this completed screening form to the Diversity and Inclusion Team.

PLEASE NOTE – there is a separate impact assessment for Welsh Language. This must also be completed for proposals.

Section 3 Socio-economic Duty needs only to be completed if proposals are of a strategic nature or when reviewing previous strategic decisions. Definition of a 'strategic nature' is available on page 6 of the Preparing for the Commencement of the Socio-economic Duty Welsh Government Guidance.

SECTION 3 – SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY (STRATEGIC DECISIONS ONLY)

The Socio-economic Duty gives us an opportunity to do things differently and put tackling inequality genuinely at the heart of key decision making. Socio-economic disadvantage means living on a low income compared to others in Wales, with little or no accumulated wealth, leading to greater material deprivation, restricting the ability to access basic goods and services.

Please consider these additional vulnerable groups and the impact your proposal may or may not have on them:

- Single parents and vulnerable families
- Pensioners
- Looked after children
- Homeless people
- Students
- Single adult households

- People living in the most deprived areas in Wales
- People with low literacy and numeracy
- People who have experienced the asylum system
- People misusing substances
- People of all ages leaving a care setting
- People involved in the criminal justice system

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<p>Low Income/<u>Income Poverty</u> <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>Digital devices can be expensive and not all are able to access digital as a service.</p> <p>Increasingly, households are having to choose between paying for Wi-Fi/mobile data or other household essentials such as food and fuel.</p> <p>Lower income families and individuals may be affected by access to and affordability of devices and connectivity. Equally as people may not have access to devices and networks, they may also not have developed digital knowledge, motivation or skills.</p> <p>The negative impacts span all aspects of daily life. The greater someone's need for digital services, the greater the impact reduced access has on their life. For example, unemployed job seekers typically have a high need, because they need to go online to search and apply for jobs, but are unable to afford to get online when they are without paid employment.</p>	<p>Local User Research – Addressing Digital Exclusion.</p> <p>Welsh Government - Digital Inclusion Strategic Framework</p> <p>Welsh Government – Digital Inclusion a forward look</p> <p>Older Peoples Commission - Leave no one behind</p> <p>Wales Cooperative - Digital Inclusion, exemplars in Wales</p> <p>NESTA - What is Data Poverty?</p> <p>Council Staff Strategy Consultation</p> <p>National Wales Survey's</p> <p>Office National Statistics</p> <p>What we mean by digital inclusion - NHS Digital</p> <p>Partner Engagement - Get RCTOnline</p> <p>Digital Communities Wales</p> <p>Centre Digital Public Service</p> <p>Office of Chief Digital Officer Wales (LocGov)</p>

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>We will take steps to mitigate negative impact by ensuring initiatives (for example free public access PCs, devices loaning, connectivity and confidence/skills support) form part of the Digital Work Programme to reduce any barriers.</p>	<p>SOCITM Cymru</p> <p>The National Survey for Wales showed that those who are economically inactive are less likely to visit a website (71%) than those in employment (82%).</p> <p>National Wales research identified that data poverty is a widespread issue across disadvantaged groups in Wales. It further stated four main barriers that prevent people from accessing enough mobile or broadband data for their needs: lack of money, lack of contracts, shared access, and lack of infrastructure</p> <p>Non-Government Sources 210513-lloyds-consumer-digital-index-2021-report.pdf (lloydsbank.com) 211109-lloyds-essential-digital-skills-report-2021.pdf</p>

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<p>Low and / or No Wealth <i>(enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provisions for the future)</i></p>	Positive	<p>Digital devices can be expensive and not all are able to access digital as a service.</p> <p>Increasingly, households are having to choose between paying for Wi-Fi/mobile data or other household essentials such as food and fuel.</p> <p>Lower income families and individuals may be affected by access to and affordability of devices and connectivity. Equally as people may not have access to devices and networks, they may also not have developed digital knowledge, motivation or skills.</p> <p>The negative impacts span all aspects of daily life. The greater someone's need for digital services, the greater the impact reduced access has on their life. For example, unemployed job seekers typically have a high need, because they need to go online to search and apply for jobs, but are unable to afford to get online when they are without paid employment</p>	As Above

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		We will take steps to mitigate negative impact by ensuring initiatives (for example free public access PCs, devices loaning, connectivity and confidence/skills support) form part of the Digital Work Programme to reduce any barriers.	
<p><u>Material Deprivation</u> <i>(unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.)</i></p>	Positive	<p>Digital devices can be expensive and not all are able to access digital as a service.</p> <p>Increasingly, households are having to choose between paying for Wi-Fi/mobile data or other household essentials such as food and fuel.</p> <p>Lower income families and individuals may be affected by access to and affordability of devices and connectivity. Equally as people may not have access to devices and networks, they may also not have developed digital knowledge, motivation or skills.</p> <p>We will take steps to mitigate negative impact by ensuring initiatives (for example free public access PCs, devices loaning, connectivity and confidence/skills support) form part of</p>	As Above

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		the Digital Work Programme to reduce any barriers.	

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<p><u>Area Deprivation</u> <i>(where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport))</i></p>	Positive	<p>People living in rural areas who are not online maybe excluded due to problems in broadband provision, both for fixed line and mobile broadband services. There are still areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf affected by not-spots, although the prevalence of these is decreasing.</p> <p>We will take steps to mitigate the negative impact by working with telecome suppliers, Welsh Government and communities to seek opportunities to further decrease not-spots.</p>	<p>Local Broadband information - Rhondda Cynon Taf. https://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/W06000016</p> <p>Rhondda Cynon Taf current information is that 1.2% of buildings across the County Borough are unable to access a minimum of Superfast Broadband speed (to 30mbps), this in the context of 3.7% gap across Wales.</p>
<p>Socio-economic background <i>(social class i.e. parents education, employment and income)</i></p>	Positive	The Strategy and digital work programme will seek to create opportunities for socio-economic disadvantaged people. jobs and opportunities, but also	

		enable them to participate in activities that may not have been accessible in the past	
Socio-economic disadvantage <i>(What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)</i>	Positive		

SECTION 4 – FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

You should use the information gathered at the screening stage to assist you in identifying possible negative/adverse impacts and clearly identify which groups are affected.

- 4.a) In terms of disproportionate/negative/adverse impacts that the proposal may have on a protected group, outline the steps that will be taken to reduce or mitigate the impact for each group identified. **Attach a separate action plan where impacts are substantial.**
- 4.b) If ways of reducing the impact have been identified but are not possible, please explain why they are not possible.
- 4.c) Give sufficient detail of data or research that has led to your reasoning, in particular, the sources used for establishing the demographics of service users/staff.
- 4.d) Give details of how you engaged with service users/staff on the proposals and the steps taken to avoid any disproportionate impact on a protected group. Explain how you have used feedback to influence your decision.
- 4.e) Are you satisfied that the engagement process complies with the requirements of the Statutory Equality and Socio-economic Duties?
- Yes No

SECTION 5 – MONITORING AND REVIEW

5a) Please outline below how the implementation of the proposal will be monitored:

To oversee the delivery of this Strategy and its associated Digital Work Programme, a Strategic Digital Delivery Board will be formed. The board will:-

- Provide the leadership and strategic direction to drive forward the Councils' Digital ambitions and priorities.
- Champion digital, technology and data across the Council, ensuring resources are deployed to achieve the maximum outcomes.
- Monitor and challenge progress of the Digital Work Programme to ensure deliverables are met.
- Act as a gateway for the strategic assessment and approval of future requested digital work proposals to ensure compliance with legislation e.g. Welsh Language, UKGDPR, Equality, and their effective prioritisation.
- Oversee and guide the delivery of actions aligned to the strategy.

Review guidance and digital inclusion reporting to support decision making.

The ICT & Digital Service will continue to use data published through the National Survey for Wales, Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Ofcom to monitor levels of Internet Use/Digital Inclusion across Wales and to report against targets set out within the Strategy.

Progress will further be monitored by the Senior Leadership Team, Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

5b) When is the evaluation of the proposal due to be reviewed?

The Strategy is due to be reported to Cabinet in March 2022. Once approved/formulised a Digital Work Programme will be developed for delivery.

5c) Who is responsible for the monitoring and review of the proposal?

The ICT & Digital Service Management team reporting to the Strategic Digital Delivery Board.

5d) How will the results of the monitoring be used to develop future proposals?

Each theme within the Strategy will have its own work stream and delivery plan that form the overarching Digital Work Programme. Individual project closure reports will encompass any learning to inform future proposals.

SECTION 6 – REVIEW

As part of the Impact Assessment process all proposals that fall within the definition of ‘Key Decisions’ must be submitted to the Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your proposal is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.

If this proposal is a Key Decision please forward your impact assessment to Councilbusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk for a Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. The EqlA guidance document provides more information on what a Key Decision is.

It is important to keep a record of this process so that you can demonstrate how you have considered equality and socio-economic outcomes. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below

Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation

SECTION 6 – SUMMARY OF IMPACTS FOR THE PROPOSAL

Provide below a summary of the impact assessment. This summary should be included in the equality and socio-economic impact section of the Cabinet report template. The impact assessment should be published alongside the report.

SECTION 7 – AUTHORISATIONS

Lead Officer: Gareth Pearce

Name: Gareth Pearce

Position: Head of Technology

Date: 18/2/22

I recommend that the proposal:

- Is implemented with no amendments
- Is implemented taking into account the mitigating actions outlined
- Is rejected due to disproportionate negative impacts on protected groups or socio-economic disadvantage

Head of Service/Director Approval: Tim Jones

Name: Tim Jones

Position: Service Director - ICT & Digital

Date: 18/2/22

Please submit this impact assessment with any SLT/Cabinet Reports.

WELSH LANGUAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOL

This Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIS) tool enables RCT Council to consider the principles and requirements of the [Welsh Language Standards \(No.1\) Regulations 2015](#) to ensure compliance with the [Welsh Language \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#).

Stage 1 – Information Gathering	
NOTE: As you complete this tool you will be asked for evidence to support your views . Please see Welsh Language Impact Assessment Guidance for more information on data sources.	
Proposal Name:	Digital Strategy 2022-2026
Department	ICT & Digital
Service Director	Tim Jones
Officer Completing the WLIA	Gareth Pearce
Email	gareth.pearce@rctcbc.gov.uk
Phone	07769164603
Brief Description	The Digital Strategy 2022-2026 seeks to put in place our vision of being a truly “Digitally Driven Council,” that provides excellent services, which are efficient, effective and designed with the person and modern customer expectations at their heart and delivered by a digitally empowered workforce. This Strategy replaces the previous Digital Strategy 2017.
Date	8/2/22
Please outline who this proposal affects? (Service Users, Employees, Wider Community)	Service Users, Employees, Members, Visitors, Wider Community

<p>What are the aims of the policy, and how do these relate to the Welsh Language?</p>	<p>Our Digital Strategy will aim to better enable a more efficient and effective organisation, one that challenges everything we do to see if we can do it better and continually seeks to maximise the resources, we have available. The Strategy seeks to put in place our vision of being a truly “Digitally Driven Council,” that provides excellent services, which are efficient, effective and designed with the person and modern customer expectations at their heart and delivered by a digitally empowered workforce</p> <p>Our strategy will be delivered through four thematic workstream areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Solutions and Service Design • Data Insight and Intelligence • Digital Infrastructure • Digital Skills, Learning & Inclusion <p>In relation to the Welsh language our strategy themes are cross cutting however the areas of Digital Solutions & Service Design and Digital Skills, Learning & Inclusion are work streams that will provide positive impacts. For example, Digital Solutions, Software and Services that will be designed to support the Welsh Language and bi-lingual provision to assist improvement to skills, collaboration and digital competency.</p>
<p>Who will benefit / Could the policy affect Welsh language groups? If so, list them here.</p>	<p>All learners and bilingual - staff, residents, elected members and partners may be affected by this policy proposal.</p>
<p>Current linguistic profile of the geographical area(s) concerned</p>	<p>Every ten years the nation sets aside one day for the Census, a count of all people and households. The Census is a key source of information about the number of people who can speak Welsh.</p> <p>The 2011 Census¹ indicated that of the 225,555 residents living in the County Borough, 12.3% (27,779) were able to speak Welsh. This can be compared to the all Wales figures that showed of the 2,955,841 residents living Wales, 19.0% (562,016) were able to speak Welsh.</p> <p>The Annual Population Survey² collects information about respondents’ Welsh speaking ability and includes a question on how often people speak Welsh.</p> <p>The Annual Population Survey for the quarter ending September 2020, reported that 19.3% of respondents living in the County Borough said they could speak Welsh, this is compared to the all Wales percentage of 28.8% of respondents. This can be further broken down to the data contained in the table that follows.</p>

Welsh Language Skills of Residents – (%)		
	County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf	Wales
Can Read Welsh	18.2%	25.8%
Can Write Welsh	16.7%	23.5%
Can Understand Spoken Welsh	23.5%	33.0%

A breakdown can also be found below for the language skill level of our staff

Level	Percentage
Level 0	43.56%
Level 1	40.50%
Level 2	4.99%
Level 3	1.98%
Level 4	2.19%
Level 5	6.75%

¹ [2011 Census](#)

² [Annual Population Survey](#)

Other relevant data or research

Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

In this section you need to consider the impact, the evidence and any action you are taking for improvement. This is to ensure that the opportunities for people who choose to live their lives and access services through the medium of Welsh are not inferior to what is afforded to those choosing to do so in English, in accordance with the requirement of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

Please note there is a separate impact assessment for Equality and Socio-Economic duty that must also be completed for policy proposals.

Remember that effects that are positive for some groups could be detrimental to others - even among Welsh language groups. Consider the effects on different groups. For example, a proposal may be beneficial to Welsh learners, but not to Welsh speakers.

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>Opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language</p> <p>e.g. staff, residents and visitors</p> <p>The rights of Welsh speakers and learners to use Welsh when dealing with the council and for staff to use Welsh at Work</p>	Positive	<p>The Digital Strategy will support people who choose to access services through the medium of Welsh, being able to participate fully as digital citizens / staff and members.</p> <p>Ensuring new digital services are built on user-centred design principles, and that they are developed to be bilingual and fully accessible will help support the use of the Welsh language</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local User Research – Addressing Digital Exclusion. • Welsh Government – Welsh Language Technology Plan • Council Staff Strategy Consultation • National Wales Survey’s • Office National Statistics • Partner Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Digital Communities Wales 	<p>Digital Work Programme deliverables will consider the impact on the Welsh language as part of its acceptance, design and solution process. The Strategic Digital Delivery Board will act as the gatekeeper for digital project approval.</p> <p>It should be noted that the digital marketplace does not always allow for the procurement of compliant bilingual solutions however this</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Centre Digital Public Service ○ Office of Chief Digital Officer Wales (LocGov) ○ SOCITM Cymru ○ Welsh Government 	<p>will always be stated as a requirement. Should we need to procure a solution that is not fully compliant, we will work with vendors to improve, lobby for change with partners e.g. CDPS/WLGA, and consider alternative options e.g. software that replaces text in real-time.</p> <p>Continually engage with key incumbent software providers to discuss opportunities to improve their solutions to the benefit of Welsh.</p> <p>Continue to use the Welsh Governments Procurement toolkit re: Making multilingual technology easy.</p> <p>Work with the Welsh Language unit to implement Welsh Digital Tools as choice.</p>
--	--	--	---	---

Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?

<p style="text-align: center;">Numbers and / or percentages of Welsh speakers</p> <p>e.g. Welsh Medium Education / Study Opportunities. Links with the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Strategy / RCTCBC Five Year Welsh Language Strategy</p>	Neutral	<p>Although the Digital Strategy is not likely to have a substantial direct impact on its own, the improved coordination and strategic direction for the development of digital services, the increased use of user-centred design, improving infrastructure and creation of bilingual, accessible digital services will create an improved environment for wider initiatives to have a positive impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local User Research – Addressing Digital Exclusion • Welsh Government – Welsh Language Technology Plan • National Wales Survey's • Council Staff Strategy Consultation • Office National Statistics • Partner Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Digital Communities Wales ○ Centre Digital Public Service ○ Office of Chief Digital Officer Wales (LocGov) ○ SOCITM Cymru ○ Welsh Government 	<p>Promote the availability of Welsh digital channels, tools and services.</p> <p>Delivery of skills and learning activities through the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>Work with the Welsh Language unit to implement Welsh Digital Tools as choice.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities to promote the Welsh language</p> <p>e.g. status, use of Welsh language services, use of Welsh in everyday life in work and in the community</p> <p>Actively encourage and promote the use of our services in Welsh to see an increase in demand over time</p>	Positive	<p>The Digital Strategy will support people who choose to access services through the medium of Welsh, being able to participate fully as digital citizens / staff and members.</p> <p>Ensuring new digital services are built on user-centred design principles, and that they are developed to be bilingual and fully accessible will help support the use of the Welsh language.</p> <p>Improving Digital Skills, Learning and Inclusion will be key to encourage, promote and sustain the use of Digital Services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local User Research – Addressing Digital Exclusion • Welsh Government – Welsh Language Technology Plan • National Wales Survey's • Council Staff Strategy Consultation • Office National Statistics • Partner Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Digital Communities Wales ○ Centre Digital Public Service ○ SOCITM Cymru ○ Office of Chief Digital Officer Wales (LocGov) ○ Welsh Government 	<p>Promote the availability of Welsh digital channels, tools and services.</p> <p>Delivery of skills and learning activities through the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>Work with the Welsh Language unit to implement Welsh Digital Tools as choice.</p> <p>Researching Welsh only digital tools and solutions that will support and encourage learners and fluent speakers digitally</p>

Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>Compliance with the Council’s Statutory Welsh Language Standards e.g. increasing or reducing the Council’s ability to deliver services through the Medium of Welsh.</p> <p>Consider the rights of Welsh speakers to use Welsh when dealing with the Council and for staff to use Welsh at Work</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The Digital Strategy will support people who choose to access services through the medium of Welsh, being able to participate fully as digital citizens / staff and members.</p> <p>Ensuring new digital services are built on user-centred design principles, and that they are developed to be bilingual and fully accessible will help support the use of the Welsh language. This will increase the ability to deliver services through the medium of Welsh.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local User Research – Addressing Digital Exclusion • Welsh Government – Welsh Language Technology Plan • National Wales Survey’s • Council Staff Strategy Consultation • Office National Statistics • Partner Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Digital Communities Wales ○ Centre Digital Public Service ○ Office of Chief Digital Officer Wales (LocGov) ○ SOCITM Cymru ○ Welsh Government 	<p>The assessment of all Digital Work Programme deliverables will consider the impact on the Welsh language as part of its acceptance, design and solution process. The Strategic Digital Delivery Board will act as the gatekeeper for digital project approval.</p> <p>It should be noted that the digital marketplace does not always allow for the procurement of compliant bilingual solutions however this will always be stated as a requirement. Should we need to procure a solution that is not fully compliant, we will work with vendors to improve, lobby for change with partners e.g. CDPS/WLGA, and consider</p>

				<p>alternative options e.g. software that replaces text in real-time.</p> <p>Continually engage with key incumbent software providers to discuss opportunities to improve their solutions to the benefit of Welsh.</p> <p>Work with the Welsh Language unit to implement Welsh Digital Tools as choice.</p>
<p>Treating the Welsh language, no less favourably than the English language</p>				

Stage 3 - Strengthening the proposal

Having listed actions in section 2 which may mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts – please record below which ones you will imbed into the policy proposal and who will be responsible for them.

Also consider is the proposal necessary? Would it be possible to meet demand without any new developments? Could other existing provision be used? Where should the development be?

What are you going to do?	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible?
Ensure the process for Digital Service / project take on, design process and solution includes steps to assess, consider and incorporate the Welsh Language.	As part of an action plan subject to Strategy approval	Head of Digital Transformation
Work with the Welsh Language unit to implement Welsh Digital Tools as choice.	As part of an action plan subject to Strategy approval	Head of Digital Transformation
Promote the availability of Welsh Digital Channels, tools and Services	As part of an action plan subject to Strategy approval	Head of Digital Transformation
Ensure digital skills, learning and inclusion activities are offered to meet demand through the medium of Welsh.	As part of an action plan subject to Strategy approval	Head of Digital Transformation
Ongoing engagement with incumbent Council system suppliers to seek opportunities to improve their solutions for the benefit of Welsh	As part of an action plan subject to Strategy approval	Head of ICT Operations
Ensure process in place for digital project assessment to undertake analysis of digital/internet poverty and excluded when providing bilingual services.	As part of an action plan subject to Strategy approval	Head of Digital Transformation

If ways of reducing the impact have been identified but are not possible to implement, please explain why. Give sufficient detail of data or research that has led to your reasoning.

What was identified?	Why is it not possible?	
Some digital systems that are implemented either do not provide or fully provide the ability to use Welsh.	Software suppliers may not support or plan to incorporate Welsh language within their offerings.	
<p><u>Stage 4 – Review</u></p> <p>As part of the Welsh Language, Equalities and Socio-Economic Duty Impact Assessment Process all proposals that fall within the definition of Significant Key Decision should present at the Officer Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your report is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.</p> <p>If this proposal is a Key Strategic Decision please forward your impact assessment to CouncilBusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk for an Officer Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. See our guidance document for more information on what a Significant Key Decision is.</p> <p>For all policy proposals, whether it is a Significant Key Decision or not you are required to forward this assessment to Welsh Language services in the first instance for some initial guidance and feedback.</p> <p>It is important to keep a record of this process so that we can demonstrate how we have considered and built in sustainable Welsh language considerations wherever possible. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below</p>		
Welsh Language Services Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Welsh Language Services feedback
<p>This is a detailed impact assessment which lists many of the intended positive impacts this proposal will have on the Welsh Language.</p> <p>Welsh Language Services encourage you to consider further the following -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An analysis of digital/internet poverty within our county borough and how we plan to overcome that challenge 	21/02/2022	<p>Comments are agreed. The strategy has been updated to specifically reference the Welsh language within key workstreams of the strategy to further embed Welsh language consideration into these important service delivery areas.</p> <p>Action placed in section 3. to ensure process in place for digital project assessment to undertake analysis of digital/internet poverty and excluded when providing bilingual services.</p>

<p>when providing our bilingual services.</p> <p>- How we plan to provide Council services to the digitally excluded, who may not engage in any learning currently proposed?</p> <p>- Reference to the Welsh language within workstream 1 and 11 of the strategy to further embed Welsh language consideration into these important service delivery areas.</p>		
Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
	4 th March	
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation

Stage 5 – Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing

How and who will you monitor the impact and effectiveness of the proposal?

To oversee the delivery of this Strategy and its associated Digital Work Programme, a Strategic Digital Delivery Board will be formed. The board will:-

- Provide the leadership and strategic direction to drive forward the Councils' Digital ambitions and priorities.
- Champion digital, technology and data across the Council, ensuring resources are deployed to achieve the maximum outcomes.
- Monitor and challenge progress of the Digital Work Programme to ensure deliverables are met.

- Act as a gateway for the strategic assessment and approval of future requested digital work proposals to ensure compliance with legislation e.g. Welsh Language, UKGDPR, Equality, and their effective prioritisation.
- Oversee and guide the delivery of actions aligned to the strategy.

The ICT & Digital Service will continue to use data published through the National Survey for Wales, Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Ofcom to monitor levels of Internet Use/Digital Inclusion across Wales and to report against targets set out within the Strategy.

Stage 6 – Summary of Impacts for the Proposal

Provide below a summary of the impact assessment. This summary should be included in the Welsh Language Considerations section of the SLT/Cabinet report template. The impact assessment should be published alongside the report.

A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been completed and the main findings are as follows -

The Digital Strategy will support people who choose to access services through the medium of Welsh and allow people to participate fully as digital citizens / staff and members. The Digital Work Programme deliverables will be built on user-centred design principles and where possible developed to be bilingual and fully accessible, which will support the use of the Welsh language.

It should be noted that the digital marketplace does not always allow for the procurement of fully compliant bilingual solutions, however this will always be stated as a requirement and should we need to procure a solution that is not fully compliant, we will work with vendors to improve, lobby for change and consider alternative options e.g. software that replaces text in real-time.

Stage 7 – Sign Off			
Name of Officer completing the WLIA	Gareth Pearce	Service Director Name:	Tim Jones
Position	Head of Technology	I recommend that the proposal: (Highlight decision)	Is implemented with no amendments
			Is implemented taking into account the mitigating actions outlined
			Is rejected due to disproportionate negative impacts on the Welsh language
Signature		Service Director Signature	
Date	2/3/22	Date	2/3/22

This page is intentionally left blank

CABINET

21st March 2022

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 31st December 2021 (Quarter 3)

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

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

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report provides Members with an overview of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective, based on the first nine months of this financial year (to the 31st December 2021).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

2.1 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 lifted.

Revenue

2.2 Note and agree the General Fund revenue outturn position of the Council as at the 31st December 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

2.3 Note the capital outturn position of the Council as at the 31st December 2021 (Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary).

2.4 Note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 31st December 2021 (Section 3f of the Executive Summary).

Corporate Plan Priorities

2.5 Note the Quarter 3 progress updates for the Council's Corporate Plan priorities (Sections 5 a – c of the Executive Summary).

2.6 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).

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To agree the Council's financial and operational performance position as at the 31st December 2021 to enable elected Members and other stakeholders to scrutinise the performance of the Council.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 This report provides Members with the third update of the Council's financial and operational performance position for the financial year ending the 31st March 2022.
- 4.2 The aim of the report is to bring together the Council's performance into an Executive Summary and make available more detailed information to the reader through electronic links. Information contained in the Executive Summary includes financial data, progress against our Corporate Plan priorities (with exceptions highlighted within the detailed sections to ensure that elected Members and other readers are able to quickly identify the key issues), investment priority updates and progress made to enhance the Council's response to extreme weather events.
- 4.3 Members will note that this report is 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. Further information in this regard is included within the Executive Summary.

5.0 QUARTER 3 REPORT

- 5.1 The Quarter 3 report is attached and comprises:
- **Executive Summary** – setting out, at a glance, the overall performance of the Council as at Quarter 3 (i.e. 31st December 2021).
 - **Revenue Monitoring** – sections 2a – e setting out the detailed projected financial spend against budget across our Revenue Budget with exceptions highlighted.
 - **Capital Monitoring** – sections 3a – e setting out capital spend across our Capital Programme with exceptions highlighted and section 3f covering Prudential Indicators.
 - **Organisational Health** – includes information on turnover, sickness absence, organisational health related investment areas and Council strategic risks.

- **Corporate Plan Priorities** – three action plans (Sections 5a – c) setting out progress updates for the priorities of People, Places and Prosperity.
- **Enhancing the Council’s response to extreme weather events** - Section 6 setting out progress made to implement the recommendations agreed by Cabinet on [18th December 2020](#).

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS AND SOCI-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 The Council’s Performance Report provides an update on financial and operational performance for the first 9-months of 2021/22; as a result, there are no equality and diversity or socio-economic duty implications to report.

7.0 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no Welsh language implications as a result of the recommendations in this report.

8.0 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Following consideration by Cabinet, this Report will be presented to the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee for review, challenge and where deemed required, the scrutiny of specific areas in line with the Committee’s Terms of Reference. With specific regard to progress made to implementation recommendations to enhance the Council’s response to extreme weather events, this information will be scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

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

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

11.1 The Corporate Plan progress updates included within this report align with the priorities as set out within the Council's Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 "[Making a Difference](#)". With regard to the [Well-being of Future Generations Act \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), at the 4th March 2020 Council meeting, it was agreed that the Corporate Plan priorities would also serve as its Well-being Objectives in line with the Act.

12.0 CONCLUSION

12.1 This report sets out the financial and operational performance of the Council as at Quarter 3 2021/22, that is, 31st December 2021.

12.2 The Quarter 3 revenue budget position is projecting a £0.353M overspend, this being an improved picture compared to quarters 1 and 2 and reflects the continuation of key pressures primarily within Adult and Children's Services. Work is ongoing across all services to identify cost reduction measures to contribute to bringing the financial position closer in line with budget at year-end.

12.3 The projected revenue budget position is set in the context of the significant on-going impact of Covid-19 on service delivery and takes into account in-year Welsh Government funding to support additional costs and income losses as a direct result of the pandemic. As has been the case for the year to date, work will 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.

12.4 Capital investment as at 31st December 2021 is £55.338M, with a number of schemes being re-profiled during the quarter to reflect changes in costs and new external grant funding approvals received, with the programme of capital investment supporting visible improvements in assets across the County Borough.

12.5 With regard to the Council's Corporate Plan priorities of People, Places and Prosperity, positive progress overall has been made during Quarter 3 alongside services continuing their recovery from the pandemic and building on the work undertaken during the first half of the year.

12.6 The progress update on the delivery of recommendations to enhance the Council's response to extreme weather events shows good progress overall, with key actions being taken forward to further strengthen the Council's arrangements.

Other Information:-

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

Contact Officer: Paul Griffiths

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

21st March 2022

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 31st December 2021 (Quarter 3)

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

Background Papers

Officer to contact: Paul Griffiths

**COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT
QUARTER 3 2021/22
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Contents

Section 1 – INTRODUCTION

Section 2 – REVENUE BUDGET

Revenue Budget Performance – more detailed breakdowns are included in the following sections:

- 2a Education and Inclusion Services;
- 2b Community and Children’s Services;
- 2c Chief Executive;
- 2d Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services; and
- 2e Authority Wide Budgets.

Earmark reserve update – Section 2f provides a breakdown of expenditure against service areas.

Section 3 – CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Capital programme budget – more detailed breakdowns are included in the following sections:

- 3a Chief Executive;
- 3b Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services;
- 3c Education and Inclusion Services;
- 3d Community and Children’s Services; and
- 3e Capital Programme Funding.

Prudential Indicators – a detailed breakdown is included in Section 3f.

Section 4 – ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH

- Turnover;
- Sickness Absence;
- Organisation Health related investment areas; and
- Council Strategic Risks.

Section 5 – CORPORATE PLAN

Corporate Plan priority progress updates – Quarter 3 position statements are included within the following sections:

- 5a – People;
- 5b – Places; and
- 5c – Prosperity.

Section 6 – ENHANCING THE COUNCIL’S RESPONSE TO EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

Progress update on the implementation of recommendations agreed by Cabinet on 18th December 2020 to enhance the Council’s response to extreme weather events.

Section 1 – INTRODUCTION

This Executive Summary, bringing together and summarising the Council's financial and operational performance position as at 31st December 2021, continues to be set within the context of Council service delivery operating within a very challenging environment as a result of the on-going impact of Covid-19, as was the case during 2020/21. This has required the Council, like all local authorities in Wales, to continue to adapt and change the way it provides services, many in partnership with others, to help meet the needs of residents and businesses. Where appropriate, service specific information has been included within this Executive Summary to provide the reader with a full as picture as possible in this regard.

In addition, throughout the Executive Summary electronic links have been included that enable the reader to access more detailed information, as required.

Section 2 – REVENUE BUDGET

Revenue Budget Performance

Service Area	2021/22 – as at 31 st December 2021 (Quarter 3)		
	Full Year Budget £M	Projected Expenditure as at Quarter 3 £M	Variance Over / (Under) £M
Education & Inclusion Services (2a)	195.536	195.400	(0.136)
Community & Children's Services (2b)	168.059	168.730	0.671
Chief Executive (2c)	31.720	31.383	(0.337)
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services (2d)	59.237	59.427	0.190
Sub Total	454.552	454.940	0.388
Authority Wide Budgets (2e)	73.351	73.316	(0.035)
Grand Total	527.903	528.256	0.353

Welsh Government Covid-19 funding incorporated within the Quarter 3 position (31st December 2021)

The full year revenue budget variance, projected as at 31st December 2021, is a £0.353M overspend. This forecasted position assumes that additional costs and income losses as a direct result of the pandemic will be offset by the continuation of additional funding being made available by Welsh Government to all local authorities in Wales for the remainder of the 2021/22 financial year.

Notwithstanding the on-going uncertainties associated with the impact of the omicron variant and the effectiveness of the vaccination booster programme at the end of 2021, the current estimated full year additional cost / income loss to the Council, forecasted at 31st December 2021, is £33.5M. The specific financial assistance provided to local authorities includes: additional costs in respect of housing / homelessness, free school meal payments, Adult Social Services and staff cover due to absence; and income losses where there has been a need to temporarily suspend or reduce service provision (for example, Leisure Centres, Theatres and visitor attractions). This position will be kept under on-going review as part of the compilation and submission of monthly claims to Welsh Government (including with regard to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme) and updated information will be included within the Year-End Performance Report.

Welsh Government have also indicated that additional funding will be provided to local authorities in quarter 4 to support the on-going financial implications of the pandemic, for example, demand pressures across social care and council tax collection, plus additional capital resources. Additional funding received will be considered through quarter 4 and consolidated at year end with any flexibility used to support the Council's financial resilience, including our levels of earmarked and general reserves, in line with our medium term financial planning arrangements. This is also within the context of the WG hardship fund not continuing for 2022/23 and the need for us to monitor the financial implications of this, using any flexibility afforded within our available reserves to transition any permanent additional costs into our base budget over the medium term. This was as set out in the Revenue Budget Strategy for 2022/23.

An updated position in this regard will be incorporated within the Council's Year-End Performance Report and Statement of Accounts.

The Table below sets out the total forecasted full-year additional costs and income losses assumed to be recoverable.

Service Area	Actual Additional Costs / Income Loss Recovered (Quarters 1 - 3)	Projected Additional Costs / Income Losses (Quarter 4)	Total Full Year Additional Costs / Income Losses (Actual and Projected)*
	£M	£M	£M
Education & Inclusion Services	-6.336	-0.771	-7.107
Community & Children's Services	-12.991	-1.989	-14.980
Chief Executive	-2.830	-1.960	-4.790
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services	-2.186	-0.573	-2.759
Authority Wide	-1.650	-2.221	-3.871
TOTAL	-25.993	-7.514	-33.507

* Excludes additional costs incurred / projected in respect of Test, Trace and Protect and supporting the delivery of the vaccination programme, the funding for which is being made available by Welsh Government and the Local Health Board respectively, in line with guidance.

Revenue budget variances projected at Quarter 3

1. Community and Children's Services

ADULT SERVICES

- Long Term Care & Support (£0.194M overspend);
- Commissioned Services (£0.687M overspend);
- Provider Services (£0.164M overspend); and
- Short Term Intervention Services (£0.247M underspend).

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

- Safeguarding & Support (including Children Looked After) (£0.576M overspend);
- Early Intervention (£0.194M overspend);
- Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (£0.211M underspend);
- Intensive Intervention (£0.173M underspend); and
- Management & Support Services (£0.147M underspend).

PUBLIC HEALTH AND PROTECTION

- Public Protection (£0.091M underspend); and
- Community Services (£0.135M underspend).

2. Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services

PROSPERTY & DEVELOPMENT

- Prosperity & Development (£0.053M underspend).

FRONTLINE SERVICES

- Highways Management (£0.087M underspend);
- Transportation (£0.082M overspend);
- Strategic Projects (£0.125M underspend);
- Street Cleansing (£0.098M underspend); and
- Waste Services (£0.491M overspend).

3. Chief Executive

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- Human Resources (£0.163M underspend); and
- Finance & Digital Services (£0.104M underspend).

Earmark Reserve Update

- A breakdown of full year expenditure against approved earmark reserves for Service Areas can be viewed at Section 2f by [clicking here](#).

Section 3 – CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Council and its contractors / suppliers have continued to ensure effective and safe working arrangements and, in doing so, enabled the on-going delivery of capital programme projects.

Capital Programme Budget

Service Area	2021/22 - as at 31 st December 2021	
	Capital Budget £M	Actual Expenditure £M
Chief Executive (3a)	4.419	1.463
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services (3b)	83.109	37.324
Education & Inclusion Services (3c)	31.806	14.461
Community & Children's Services (3d)	8.326	2.090
Total	127.660	55.338

Key Capital Variances at Quarter 3

- Re-profiling of a number of projects to reflect changes in the total cost of schemes and revised delivery timescales.
- Grant approvals introduced into the Capital Programme: Welsh Government (WG) Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme (£0.698M); WG Capital Maintenance Grant Schools (£4.052M); WG Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Grant (£0.506M); WG Placemaking (£0.159M); ULEV – WLGA Third Party Grant (£0.300M); WG Ventilation Grant (£0.185M); WG Private Rented Sector Lease Scheme (£0.106M); WG All Wales Play Opportunity Grant (£0.411M); and UK Government Levelling Up Fund (£20.386M).

For information on how the Capital Programme is funded see section 3e by [clicking here](#).

Prudential Indicators

For a detailed breakdown of Prudential Indicators, see section 3f by [clicking here](#).

Section 4 – ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH

• Turnover

Service Area	2021/22		2020/21				2019/20	
	As at 31st December 2021		As at 31st December 2020		As at 31 st March 2021		As at 31st December 2019	
	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover
Turnover – Council Wide	10,990	8.82	10,881	5.52	10,888	6.84	10,555	8.32
Community & Children’s Services	2,983	8.62	2,974	5.01	2,946	6.59	2,858	6.58
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services	901	9.21	930	4.84	941	6.70	952	5.36
Education & Inclusion Services	1,232	6.98	1,257	5.57	1,258	6.52	1,263	7.13
<u>Schools</u>	<u>4,996</u>	<u>9.59</u>	<u>4,893</u>	<u>6.27</u>	<u>4,873</u>	<u>7.47</u>	<u>4,785</u>	<u>10.41</u>
Primary	3,211	7.79	3,058	6.05	3,043	7.49	3,026	8.79
Secondary	1,785	12.83	1,835	6.65	1,830	7.43	1,759	13.19
Chief Executive’s Division	878	7.29	827	3.63	870	4.83	697	7.32

• Sickness Absence

With specific regard to Covid-19 and the recording of sickness absence, where staff have been unavailable for work due to: self-isolating; being part of the shielded list; have underlying conditions that places an individual at risk, such as being pregnant; or lives in the same household as someone that needs to be shielded, these occurrences have not been categorised as ‘sickness absence’ and as such are excluded from the analysis below.

Service Area	2021/22	2020/21			2019/20	
	As at 31st December 2021 %	As at 31st December 2020 %	As at 31 st March 2021 %	As at 31st December 2019 %	As at 31 st March 2020 %	
% days lost to sickness absence – Council Wide	5.08	3.84	3.96	3.98%	4.16	
Community & Children’s Services	7.27	5.96	6.14	5.53	5.59	
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services	5.99	5.03	4.99	4.44	4.74	
Education & Inclusion Services	4.48	3.00	3.20	3.49%	3.70	
<u>Schools</u>	<u>4.01</u>	<u>2.78</u>	<u>2.88</u>	<u>3.35</u>	<u>3.56</u>	
Primary	4.15	3.07	3.21	3.57%	3.79	
Secondary	3.77	2.31	2.33	2.97%	3.16	
Chief Executive’s Division	3.74	2.45	2.62	2.35	2.39	

For a more detailed breakdown of 2021/22 sickness absence information, click [here](#).

Organisation Health related investment areas

There will be a continued focus on investing in organisational health related areas, for example, IT infrastructure and invest to save energy efficiency schemes, with projects being delivered operationally within services across the Council.

- **Council Strategic Risks**

The Council's Quarter 3 Strategic Risk Register can be viewed by [clicking here](#) with specific updates included setting out the implications to date of Covid-19 and the work being undertaken / planned to mitigate the impact as much as possible.

As part of the quarter 3 update process, it has not been deemed necessary to revise Strategic Risk Register risk ratings to those reported as at quarter 2. This position will however be kept under on-going review and, where revisions are considered necessary, these will be included in future Strategic Risk Register updates.

Section 5 – CORPORATE PLAN

Corporate Plan priority action plans for 2021/22 were reported to and approved by full Council on the 20th October 2021 covering the three priorities of People, Places and Prosperity. A summary of the progress made across the three priorities as at 31st December 2021 is set out in Sections 5a – c and electronic links have been included to each approved action plan, providing more detailed information on progress.

Corporate Plan Priority Progress Update

- **PEOPLE** (Section 5a)

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

Summary of progress to 31st December 2021

We have continued our work to support our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life. Our new extra care facility in Pontypridd, Cwrt yr Orsaf, opened on the 15th October 2021 and 30 people have agreed a tenancy. We are also working on a business case and design options for a similar scheme in Treorchy and this work will be progressed in 2022/23 in line with a wider review of health and social care development options in the Rhondda geographical area. Planning permission for the extra care scheme in Porth has been granted and demolition work has been completed at the site of the former Dan Y Mynydd Care Home. Groundworks are progressing on site.

We have also opened a supported accommodation scheme in Mountain Ash and all apartments have now been allocated. We will open a similar scheme in Llanhari following a refurbishment of Elm Road accommodation; assessments have been completed and places have been allocated ready for the completion of the project by the end of March 2022. We are also developing a supported accommodation strategy and investment plan to continue to provide a range of modern fit for purpose supported housing options for vulnerable people that meets their needs and is supported, where appropriate, by access to community facilities. This work has been delayed during quarter 3 but it is anticipated that the plan will be completed by the end of March 2022.

We continue to invest in reablement services to prevent escalation of need increasing or enable recovery and independence. This has included a review and redesign of our Support@Home Service and Adaptations & Community Equipment (ACE) Service to reflect demand and promote independence.

We are working with carers and partners to ensure respite provision is meeting the needs of both the people who use services and their carers so that people are able to live in their family homes for longer. A “More than respite” carer engagement event was held to inform respite service offer development plans for 2022/23.

Demand for domiciliary care remains high as demand for services increase. We continue to work with homecare providers to build capacity and resilience to improve market stability and ensure we can meet demand and ensure good quality care, and this will be an on-going programme of work.

We are also building on our engagement and learning from the pandemic to inform the transformation of day services going forward so that people with a learning disability have access to meaningful activity and opportunities in their own communities, including

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

employment to achieve their personal goals and live ordinary lives. A range of engagement activity has been undertaken including 'The My Day, My Way' engagement programme which has now closed. All survey responses and other feedback is being collated to be shared and inform development of a draft Day Opportunities Strategy.

We continue to encourage all residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental wellbeing. As well as opening the brand new gym at Llys Cadwyn in Pontypridd in April 2021 and Ponty Lido having its most successful season, we have also reopened Hawthorn Swimming Pool in October 2021.

We also have a full programme of outdoor exercise opportunities throughout RCT leisure facilities and Parks (where applicable). Two outdoor rigs have been installed in Ynysangharad Park and Dare Valley Country Park as part of the Leisure For Life fitness offer. A rig has also been purchased for Abercynon Sports Centre with installation timescales rescheduled for March 2022. We are also developing a programme for 2022 for wider community outdoor opportunities and promotion of increased participation to encourage residents to utilise our outdoor spaces, and are planning to further develop the online Leisure for Life offer to allow members to access classes and workouts at home. The equipment has been purchased and a revised timescale for implementation is being planned to allow sufficient time for staff training.

Work has commenced on the Treorchy Cultural Hub, with the works to Treorchy Library completed in December 2021. Work at the Park & Dare Theatre foyer area is planned, subject to funding. A Community Engagement Plan is also being developed to ensure that our theatres are more inclusive and accessible to the whole community, and we have continued to plan for online and blended delivery until the end of the year (noting that it is planned for theatres to reopen for live events during Quarter 4 in line with WG guidance). We are also working with our partners to ensure residents are heard and have the opportunity to influence decisions, activities & services in their communities. An RCT Together Survey is live and we will share the results of this survey with Neighbourhood Networks <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/GetInvolved/RCTTogether/CommunityConversationsConsultations/RCTTogetherSurvey.aspx>

We are working with Health to explore options for the development of an integrated community health and social care locality model and have completed a review to inform this work, with an optimal integrated community model agreed by regional partners for cluster development planning and implementation in 2022/23. We are also working together to improve patient experience and redesign the pathways for integrated primary and community based urgent care services and 'home first' discharge from hospital services. This includes a review and refresh of the hospital discharge protocol, including performance standards and measures to deliver effective transfers of care from Royal Glamorgan hospital.

Our work to review and redesign Community Mental Health Services with the Health Service is ongoing. As part of this we will complete a review of current Community Mental Health Services and develop options to redesign our joint Service offer to meet current and future need and demand pressures. Redesign work has continued but completion has been delayed primarily due to covid pressures. A new work programme and timescales will be agreed with the Health Service for 2022/23.

Using the RCT Neighbourhood Network Groups, we will begin to co-produce/design with partners a social prescribing model and following this we will work with partners to review

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

gaps in provision and identify ways to address unmet needs. This work will be taken forward in 2022/23 when staff are anticipated to be released from the TTP Service.

Our priority is to improve services for children and young people and ensure the needs of children are considered in everything we do. We will ensure that the emotional wellbeing and mental health needs of children and young people aged 0-25 and their families are central to the delivery of services. This work has included delivering a programme of Targeted Play provision for vulnerable 5-14 year olds with care and support needs. These play sessions are being offered at pre-pandemic levels, with capacity back to normal operating level. However, take-up has been slow in certain areas with families apprehensive about allowing their child, potentially with medical needs, to mix with a bubble of children outside of their school or personal bubble. We have also enhanced the provision of support to 16-25 year olds delivered by the Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS). Projects include entrepreneurship courses, pre-employment skills, mental health and wellbeing, amongst others.

We will continue to strengthen participation of children and young people to promote engagement specifically with Children Looked After and partner agencies to ensure coproduction and that the voice of children and young people are heard in service development and delivery. We have developed a Participation Strategy which incorporates different communication approaches when engaging with children and young people. We have successfully bid for a Graduate Officer who, once appointed, will build capacity and take forward the Participation Strategy in 2022/23. We are seeking to provide effective Edge of Care services to ensure that children, young people and families receive the right support at the right time, supporting their physical and mental wellbeing. This includes development of the Regional MAPPS Service (Therapeutic Regional Service for CLA) which will go live in January 2022. We also plan to co-produce a prevention of youth antisocial and criminal behaviour strategy with the Community Safety Team which will ensure the positive engagement of young people in community life. This work is currently delayed due to current delivery requirements and will be taken forward in 2022/23.

We continue to focus on enhancing the wellbeing of our learners. The Integrated Wellbeing Pathway which was established during the pandemic to help children return to school has been reviewed and is continuing to operate. Additional funding has been secured to continue the additional capacity for dedicated stress and anxiety courses that young people can access outside of school. We have also purchased Play therapy and devised a well-being programme with Bluemind for families to help them address their emotional well-being issues that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. The Central South Consortium continues to provide a comprehensive professional learning offer to all schools across the region to develop effective approaches to improve mental health and wellbeing. We are also implementing our Action Plan for Enhanced Counselling Support for Children and Young People to further improve our school-based counselling provision. Our work with Continuing Care and the CAHMS service is not progressing as planned due to recruitment issues. We are now looking at alternative ways of delivering emotional wellbeing outcomes in house and a shared approach has been agreed with Health to take this forward.

We are delivering the Early Years Transformation agenda in RCT in order to ensure early years services are universally available and specialist services are targeted by need and not geographical location. Health characteristics data transfer has been completed and an Early Years Vulnerability Project plan is in place and a full profile test underway. A draft 3-year strategic plan for the region identifying key milestone and outcomes at each stage has been

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

developed and a series of workforce development sessions for early years practitioners and other partners communicating the vision and aims of the Early Years Transformation Programme are due to be delivered in Quarter 4. In parallel, work is ongoing to widely communicate operational changes to families, community organisations and providers around early years services being universal and not confined to Flying Start areas.

The full action plan can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 3

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PEOPLE		
Investment Area	Investment Value¹ £M	Quarter 3 Update
Extracare Housing	6.974	<p>This investment funding covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The former Maesyffynnon Home for the Elderly site (Aberaman) – completed and the first residents moved into the new facility in May 2020. •Pontypridd "Cwrt yr Orsaf" Extra Care Housing Scheme) – completed 15th October 2021. •Porth - agreed by the Council's Cabinet on 3rd December 2020. Progress to date includes: the vacation of the building; site surveys and demolition works completed; and planning permission granted 16th December 2021 (following which groundworks commenced). <p>Consideration of development proposals for Treorchy and Mountain Ash schemes are on-going.</p>
Tackling Poverty Fund	0.300	This investment funding, along with Arbed funding, is to help address areas where there are high levels of poverty (including fuel poverty) to increase the disposable income of households, for example, by supporting households to reduce energy bills, helping to overcome barriers to find employment.
Total	7.274	

¹ Investment Value – relates to LIVE projects / works only that have been allocated additional investment funding.

o **PLACES** (Section 5b)

PLACES - Where people are proud to live, work and play

Summary of progress to 31st December 2021

The Council's Enforcement Team continues to tackle environmental crime. 2,514 fly-tipping incidents have been recorded this year to date, 312 more incidents than reported in the same period of 2019/20. All prosecutions relating to fly-tipping offences have been made public on the Council's [webpages](#), enforcing the zero tolerance message. In partnership with Keep Wales Tidy, a [national campaign](#) has commenced to tackle dog fouling with clear stencilled messages on paths and on footways in our parks and playing fields enforcing the requirements of the Dog Fouling PSPO, and encouraging responsible dog ownership. We continue to work successfully with partners on 'blitz' programmes on social housing sites and focussed work with landlords regarding communal bin collection points continues.

Work continues to encourage good recycling practices that will reduce municipal waste and have a positive effect on the environment. The tonnage of recycled waste for quarters 1 to 3 is higher than the same period last year (72,681 tonnes compared to 71,240 tonnes in 2020/21) and our overall recycling percentage² has increased to 70.62% (68.99% at Quarter 3 in 2020/21). This position also exceeds the Welsh Government target to achieve 70% recycling by 2025. We continue to work towards a sustainable 'Circular Economy' through our partnership work to renew, recycle and repair and our new Aberdare High Street Reuse shop is scheduled to open in April 2022. This quarter has also seen the launch of our new [Green Waste Collection Service](#), collecting green waste fortnightly from registered residents who have been supplied with new, reusable green waste sacks reducing the Council's overall plastic bag usage by 3 million annually and contributing to the Council's Climate Change efforts.

Our climate change agenda also continues to be progressed through developments in alternative fuelled fleet vehicles, public transport and taxis; looking at ways where we can create renewable energy; reuse of hard plastic; development of the Eco Park at Bryn Pica; and implementing procurement policies to reduce the use of single use plastic items. We are also investigating the possibility of using hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) fuel instead of diesel in our vehicles; consulting on the Council's Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy and developing an Implementation Plan. The 'Try before you buy' electric vehicle taxi trial has started and 5 electric taxis have commenced operation. Supporting this trial, the 3 dedicated 65kw EV taxi charging points at Pontypridd, Porth and Aberdare will become operational by the end of March 2022. Day's Rental are managing the scheme and will be collating the feedback from the drivers after their 30-day trial.

Our latest Annual [Air Quality](#) Report was submitted to Welsh Government in October 2021 and included a recommended delay in the review of Air Quality Action Plans until 2022 due to the uncertainty of how the pandemic has affected air quality and how this could impact on future air quality trends.

Our highways investment programme activity continues across the County Borough, together with work on repairs and flood mitigation measures. Various schemes have been completed to date including the design for the Castle Inn footbridge Treforest and the Cwmbach Industrial Estate Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS). Two of our bridge replacement schemes were also recognised in the [Annual ICE Wales Cymru Awards](#). St Alban's Bridge in Blaenrhondda won the Roy Edwards Award for demonstrating excellence in - concept, planning, design, contract management and construction with a final cost of less than £5m, and the Ynysangharad

² Recycling – provisional recycling data

PLACES - Where people are proud to live, work and play

Footbridge (M&S Bridge) repair in Pontypridd has been highly commended in the Alun Griffiths Award for Community Engagement. Some schemes have been delayed for various reasons including alterations to original plans, third party constraints, lack of contractor resources due to Covid-19, supply chain issues and project complexities being identified. All delayed projects have revised delivery dates.

Our statutory work as lead Flood Authority continues and following the installation of new technology, we are now better able to remotely monitor and report on key culverts and drainage systems. This information is relayed directly to the Central Emergency Control Centre at Ty Elai.

We have commenced our Welsh Government grant bidding process for the 'Safe Routes in Communities' Programme following discussions with schools, Councillors and communities on schemes to be considered. We continue to progress opportunities to develop Active Travel routes including schemes in Treorchy, between Pontygwaith and Maerdy, links with Treforest Industrial Estate and communities around the Church Village Community Route. We are also looking at concepts for routes that link with our town centre enhancements at Aberdare, Porth and Pontypridd. In November a number of activities across RCT were organised supporting [Road Safety Week](#) including child pedestrian training and cycle training.

Our community cohesion work progresses. A draft Community Asset Transfer Policy is out for review with Members, and the development of RCT as a Sustainable Food Place continues at a pace with the recruitment of a Sustainable Food Coordinator, the holding of a partnership update meeting in December and the approval of funding applications by [Sustainable Food Places](#) to progress actions relating to food poverty. We also continue our work to keep our communities safe and protected from [fraudulent sales](#), and working in partnership with the Welsh Trading Standards Team to crackdown on illegal operations in Wales including [Operation CeCe](#) where 1M illegal cigarettes were seized.

Following Covid-19 restrictions, the Aberdare Community Alcohol Partnership will now be progressed next year. We continue to develop the Integrated Substance Misuse Service in Cwm Taf, with a focus on those individuals needing help but unlikely to engage with the service. The [Barod](#) Outreach Team link with hostels and those in temporary accommodation to provide advice and assistance, and work with partner organisations to provide a comprehensive service. In November, Barod were also awarded the contract to recommission Tier 1 and 2 substance misuse services so that they align with provision at Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf Councils.

We continue to invest in our green spaces and increase biodiversity. In October, thirteen of our parks and gardens were recognised as [Green Flag and Community Award winners](#) by Keep Wales Tidy. We are progressing our Playground Investment Programme recognising that challenges remain in terms of the availability of play equipment and materials.

Our work to establish natural carbon storage solutions continues and we are actively engaging with communities through our [Let's Talk Wildflowers](#) (via '[Let's Talk RCT](#)' - Our New Engagement' website). The Draft '[Action for Nature](#)' recovery plan is currently out for consultation until March and we continue to work with partners such as Natural Resources Wales to support projects like '[Healthy Hillides](#)' and '[Living Landscapes](#)'.

We continue to access external grant funding where available to improve our park infrastructure and attract tourism to Rhondda Cynon Taf with work to improve existing footpaths and improve

PLACES - Where people are proud to live, work and play

visitor signage at Dare Valley Country Park, and a contractor has been appointed to deliver the National Lottery Heritage Fund work which will support further phases of the redevelopment of Ynysangharad War Memorial Park.

The full action plan can be viewed by [clicking here](#)

Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 3

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value³ £M	Quarter 3 Update
Highways Infrastructure Repairs	7.928	The additional resources are being used in conjunction with existing resources to deliver a programme of highways infrastructure repairs between 2021/22 and 2023/24.
Play Areas	0.564	There are 22 schemes which form the planned programme of works for 2021/22. As at 31 st December 2021, 7 had been completed, 5 were under construction, 3 had been designed, costed and scheduled and 7 are to be designed.
Skate Parks/Multi Use Games Areas	0.191	There are 4 schemes which form the planned programme of works for 2021/22. As at 31 st December 2021, 2 schemes had been completed and 2 are to be designed, costed and scheduled.
Structures: Brook Street Footbridge	1.287	Brook St. Footbridge – the start date for works is January 2022 and discussions are on-going with Transport for Wales in respect of the work to be undertaken.
Structures	5.721	The investment funding has been allocated to support structure projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ynys Meurig Bridge Parapet Replacement – completed August 2021; • Nant Cwm Parc Cantilever and Institute Bridge Strengthening – works have commenced on site; • Major retaining wall refurbishments – A4059 Taff's Well Wall works are scheduled to start in January 2022; and • Llanharan Railway Footbridge – demolition and replacement footbridge works scheduled to start in January 2022.
Parks Structures	1.597	The investment funding has been allocated to support various footbridge repairs and replacements within Parks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge deck and parapet replacement of Maesyfelin Footbridge (Pontyclun) – works completed; • Replacement of Abercynon Recreation Ground Footbridge - on-site works progressing; and • Various inspections and surveys continue to be undertaken as advance preparation for future schemes.
Parks and Green Spaces	0.996	This investment funding is supporting drainage, pavilion and infrastructure improvements to various parks sites. The

³ Investment Value – relates to LIVE projects / works only that have been allocated additional investment funding.

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value³ £M	Quarter 3 Update
		2021/22 programme currently comprises of 77 schemes - over half of the programme has been completed and start dates confirmed for the remaining schemes.
Llanharan Bypass	4.127	This investment funding is supporting various stages of development, preliminary design, ground investigations and ecology surveys. The project has been through the pre-Planning Application Consultation (PAC) stage including public exhibitions held on the 12 th and 14 th October. Following PAC and a review of all comments received, a full planning application will be submitted.
A4119 Dualling (Stinkpot Hill)	8.099	This investment funding is supporting the dualling of the highway between the South Wales Fire Service Headquarters roundabout and Coed Ely roundabout. The tender process to procure a contractor is progressing and work is on-going to secure the land required through the Compulsory Purchase Order process. Advanced works including tree clearance is due to commence in January 2022.
Community Hubs	0.458	This investment funding relates to supporting the Treorchy Community Hub (at Treorchy Library) - external works have been completed and internal Library works have also been completed.
Gelli/Treorchy Link Road	0.393	This investment funding relates to investigatory works for a solution which will help alleviate congestion at Stag Square. Feasibility and a WelTAG stage 1 has been completed. The next steps are to develop a preferred option through WelTAG stage 2.
Cynon Gateway (North), Aberdare Bypass	1.899	This investment funding relates to the preliminary design, planning application and tender preparation for a bypass continuation from A4059 Aberdare to join the A465 Heads Of the Valleys road. A planning application has been submitted and the decision is awaited.
Bryn Pica Eco Park	1.400	This investment funding is to support enabling works, planning and ecology for the development of an Eco Park at the Bryn Pica Waste Management Facility. Discussions are on-going with Welsh Government in respect of funding opportunities.
Dinas Community Recycling Centre	0.250	This investment funding relates to the provision of a new office building and improvements on the site of Dinas Community Recycling Centre following the demolition of the previous site building. Works have been completed.

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value³ £M	Quarter 3 Update
Land Drainage	0.511	<p>This investment funding is supporting drainage and culvert network works. The ongoing programme includes works at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cwmbach – works were substantially completed in quarter 3; • Property Flood Resistance Programme – on-going engagement with property owners and provision of flood prevention measures e.g. flood gates. • Supporting 20 Welsh Government grant funded schemes across Rhondda Cynon Taf which are scheduled to be completed by March 2022.
Porth Interchange Metro + LTF	1.500	<p>As set out in the Porth Regeneration Strategy, a new Transport Hub in the Town Centre is currently being developed. During Quarter 3, the Council was successful in its application to the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund and has secured £3.586m grant towards the construction of the Transport Hub. A contractor has been appointed for the project and they are currently mobilising resources and personnel in readiness for the construction phase to commence.</p>
Total	36.921	

o **PROSPERITY** (Section 5c)

PROSPERITY - Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to - be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper

Summary of progress to 31st December 2021

The UK Central Government announced on the 27th October 2021 the First Round Successful Bids for the UK Levelling Up Fund. 3 bids in Rhondda Cynon Taf were successful, amounting to £20.4M for the Muni Arts Centre (Pontypridd), Porth Transport Hub and A4119 Coed-Ely Dualling Scheme, and represents further significant investment to support the Council's on-going programme of economic regeneration across the County Borough.

The Council continues to lead on the £15M Transforming Towns grant across the Cardiff City Region and a strong pipeline of potential projects is in development, including review of currently disused sites. A range of property and site redevelopment projects are currently underway in our town centres. In Mountain Ash, the redevelopment of Rhos (Guto) square was completed in November, replacing two unused buildings and a derelict area of land with an extension to the town centre car park and other improvements. The redevelopment of Mountain Ash Town Hall is also substantially completed with the first tenants for the flexible working spaces being signed up. In Pontypridd, work continues to redevelop the YMCA building which will complete this financial year and, as outlined above, Levelling up funding will support the redevelopment of the Muni building into a major cultural hub. In addition, the former M&S, Burton and Dorothy Perkins buildings have been acquired and options for future use are being developed. In Tonypany, the redevelopment of Llwynypia Courthouse is now complete to a high standard, with over 100 people working in the flexible business space across a range of businesses. On January 17th, construction work commenced at Porth Transport hub, with work scheduled to complete in Spring 2023 and will form a key part of the Porth Town centre strategy, transforming the northern entry to the town.

Work to deliver major transport schemes is continuing. The works for dualling the A4119 are currently out to tender, with the scheme supported by UK Levelling Up Fund funding. Pre-application consultation has been completed for the Llanharran bypass scheme. Preparatory work to progress the Cynon Gateway North project is on-going, although delays to Welsh Government planning decision are impacting project timescales. Planning applications have been submitted for park and ride schemes at Porth and Llwynypia.

Work continues to prepare the Preferred Strategy for the revised LDP, however the Preferred Strategy process was not suitably advanced to go to public consultation in November and alternative timetables and options are being considered to progress with the revisions of the LDP.

Following adoption of the new Tourism Strategy in September, work continues to develop the visitor economy, with promotional activities including social media campaigns and work with partners to promote key businesses and their offerings including the Coal, Coin and Cheers package with Royal Mint Experience, Welsh Coal Mining Experience and Hensol Distillery.

Support continues for the development of low carbon homes, including 15 Modern Methods of Construction schemes currently within the Social Housing Grant Programme development plan. The Council continues to work with Rhondda Housing to develop the Skyline project and with Cynon Taf Housing to explore options for Porth Infants School site. 66 applicants to the Heat and Save scheme have been provided with advice and support with grant applications or grant assistance to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

A new Education Directorate strategic plan has been agreed and will be implemented in the new financial year, outlining priorities for the next 3 years. In partnership with Central South

PROSPERITY - Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to - be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper

Consortium, we continue to support all schools, regularly reviewing progress and ensuring effective assessment and tracking systems are in place to identify and support those learners most adversely affected by Covid-19. How schools devise and implement Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards plans will continue to be reviewed. A local authority literacy plan has been launched in autumn term and despite the challenges of capacity, 92% of schools have engaged in the Comparative judgement element of the project, providing intelligence on technical writing skills. Progress will continue to be monitored with improvement partners this term. The readiness of schools for the new curriculum is also being discussed by Local Authority and Central South Consortium Officers. Central South Consortium's brokerage arrangements ensure that appropriate support is provided expediently to schools, including signposting schools to CSC's professional learning offer, co-ordinating collaborative sharing of good practice between schools and supporting the profile of curriculum development through cluster-based working.

In early years, an early intervention programme is promoting the acquisition of early developmental skills in the foundation phases. All settings are using information from training modules to improve the environment in their settings, for example, creating a physical movement play area, with support brokered by Improvement partners where necessary. Schemes to improve early years facilities at Dolau Primary school, Gwauncelyn Primary school and YGG Llantrisant, funded by Welsh Government's Early Years Grant, have been completed, with 2 additional schemes at YGG Aberdar and Cwmlai on-going. The next Childcare sufficiency assessment is currently being prepared, including consultation responses from 800 parents, with the draft report due in February 2022.

Investment in our school buildings continues, with outline business cases for Bryncelynnog and Hawthorn high school approved by Welsh Government in December 2021. The New Welsh Medium Primary School Final Business Case has been submitted to Welsh Government and is awaiting panel scrutiny. A combined outline/final business case is being prepared for Pontypridd High school at the request of WG. Designs are progressing as per programme schedule.

Support for people seeking work continued through our Employment Support programmes, with a mix of face-to-face and online delivery to suit client needs. In addition 46 new clients engaged with in-work support this quarter, for assistance in improving their skills and job progression or increasing their working hours. The Council's Cabinet has approved a regional approach to Employment and Skills funding and the CELT CRF regional project has had approval. There is still a delay in information from UK Government regarding future funding for employment support although detail of the Shared Prosperity Fund is expected in the Spring.

Work continued to develop opportunities for our school pupils to gain knowledge of careers and working life, including piloting the Gatsby + project in schools. Recruitment for the next round of Graduate opportunities in the Council is now underway, with further apprenticeships to be advertised in April. We also continue to work with contractors to develop apprenticeship and training opportunities on schemes such as the Porth Transport hub.

The full action plan can be viewed by [clicking here](#)

Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 3

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PROSPERITY		
Investment Area	Investment Value ⁴ £M	Quarter 3 Update
Empty Property Grant	1.245	Following the use of Welsh Government Valleys Taskforce Grant funding during 2020/21 to support bringing empty properties back into use, the Council's funding has been re-introduced for 2021/22. The Council's funding allocation is now fully committed (and the on-line application process has closed) and it is anticipated that the expenditure will be incurred during 2021/22 and into 2022/23.
Schools	1.006	This investment funding is supporting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cymmer Primary – demolition of the canteen and erection of fencing was completed in August 2020; • YGG Llyn Y Forwyn Primary (transferring the school to a new building on a new site) - site investigation surveys have been undertaken, land has been purchased, project / cost managers have been appointed to support delivery of the scheme and a Design and Build tender process commenced in December 2021; and • Covid-19 related capital works – following site visits and scoping works, work is underway to install canopies and undertake ventilation works in over 70 schools.
Transport Infrastructure	2.500	This investment funding is supporting a wider programme of highways capital works including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress design work for pedestrian crossing enhancement projects at Tonyrefail, Groesfaen, Llanharan and Nantgarw (to improve road safety and promote active travel). • A4058 Asda Tonypanydy junction - extend entry lane lengths from the north and include cycle facilities to improve junction capacity and traffic flow and promote active travel. Works commenced in December 2021. • A4059 / Bowls Club junction - feasibility study ongoing to investigate improving the junction to improve traffic flow along the A4059. • A473 Upper Boat - WeITAGs are ongoing.
Park and Ride Programme	0.586	This investment funding is supporting the development work needed to create additional and formalised 'park and ride' car parking spaces with new and improved facilities such as Access

⁴ Investment Value – relates to LIVE projects / works only that have been allocated additional investment funding.

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PROSPERITY		
Investment Area	Investment Value ⁴ £M	Quarter 3 Update
		<p>for All, improved CCTV coverage and Electric Vehicle charging points at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pontyclun - feasibility design to improve an existing facility is ongoing in partnership with Network Rail and Transport for Wales. • Porth – phase 3 preliminary design has been completed and detailed design work is on-going.
Strategic Regeneration Investment	0.200	This funding has been approved for the Guto Square development (Mountain Ash) which has enabled a bigger and improved area for public use in the heart of the town centre for community events and business uses, and also additional car parking spaces for shoppers and visitors to the town. The construction phase of the project is now complete and the area has re-opened for public use.
Robertstown and Coed Ely ERDF Match Funding	4.200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robertstown – good progress made during Quarter 3 including the completion to all plots of: the installation of doors and windows, external wall panels and roller shutter installation. Other works progressing include: installation of solar panels, electrical and mechanical works, fire protection works, drainage works and site exit works. • Coed Ely – the building was handed over on 15th January 2021 and the tenant is now in occupation of the building.
Total	9.737	

Section 6 – ENHANCING THE COUNCIL’S RESPONSE TO EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

The 18th December 2020 Cabinet meeting agreed a series of recommendations to enhance the Council’s short and long term response to extreme weather events and which limit the impact of flooding on those communities most at risk.

The progress made by Council Services to implement the recommendations can be viewed [here](#) and will be scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21st MARCH 2022

REPORT OF DIRECTOR, PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES IN CONSULTATION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES, CLLR RHYS LEWIS

EDINBURGH DECLARATION

Author(s): Richard Wistow - Ecologist
Liz Dean - Environment Planner

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Cabinet of the Edinburgh Declaration and the role of Local Authorities within the post-2020 global biodiversity framework - ensuring transformative change for nature over the coming decade and to seek Cabinet agreement for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council to be a signatory of the Edinburgh Declaration.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended:

- 2.1 That Cabinet agrees that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council becomes a signatory to the Edinburgh Declaration.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Declaration strengthens the role of Local Authorities within the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and in particular, the post 2020 global biodiversity framework being developed at the Conference of the Parties (COP15). This meeting was held over from 2020, with virtual meetings in Autumn 2021 and is due to be completed and signed in March 2022.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Welsh Government is a signatory to the Edinburgh Declaration, which is a political statement setting out commitments to implement the post-

2020 global biodiversity framework locally. It believes that this is important to encourage a greater involvement of Subnational and Local Authorities internationally within the new framework and has written to Local Authorities welcoming their support (see appendix one).

4.2 The 'Edinburgh Process' has been led by the Scottish Government on behalf of the CBD and the Declaration calls upon the CBD Parties to:

- Take the transformative action required to halt biodiversity loss;
- Recognise the vital role of Subnational and Local Governments;
- Support a dedicated decision on a new Plan of Action for Subnational Governments, City and Local Authorities. A decision to be taken at COP15: The Conference of Parties, who signed the UN Convention on Climate Change and are meeting in China in Autumn 2022 (see *para 3 above*); and
- Develop a multi-stakeholder platform for the implementation of the post-2020 framework.

4.3 Members may be aware that Welsh Government declared a Nature Emergency in the Summer and has created a Biodiversity and Ecosystems Resilience Duty for all public bodies through S.6 Environment (Wales) Act. Their Programme for Government and the re-organisation of Cabinet portfolios demonstrates a desire for the Climate and Biodiversity Emergencies to be considered in an integrated way.

4.4 In their letter, Welsh Government recognises the vital role Local Authorities are playing in addressing the impacts of climate change and habitat loss. They believe it is essential to have a healthy and safe natural environment and to ensure people who live in local authorities across Wales can live in harmony with nature and protect valuable local ecosystems for future generations. The Declaration recognises the increasingly valuable role of Subnational Governments and Local Authorities in translating global targets into local delivery.

4.5 In RCT we have a strong 'track record' in taking forward biodiversity action. This includes:

- 'Action for Nature' the former Local Biodiversity Action Plan, currently being revised and re-presented via a website by the Local Nature Partnership,
- Strong Planning policy which enables development in the right locations and protects and enhances biodiversity and ecosystem resilience
- A clear S.6 Biodiversity Duty framework integrated into the corporate planning process
- Integration of biodiversity and ecosystem services with Climate Change work; and

- Delivery of active biodiversity management and community engagement through the Living Landscape project.
- 4.6 Further information about the Edinburgh Process, the Edinburgh Declaration and signing up is available at [Edinburgh Declaration on post-2020 global biodiversity framework - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/edinburgh-declaration-on-post-2020-global-biodiversity-framework/pages/2-2-2022-edinburgh-declaration-on-post-2020-global-biodiversity-framework.aspx)
- 5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**
- 5.1 There are no Equality and Diversity Implications arising from this report.
- 6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**
- 6.1 There are no Welsh Language Implications arising from this report.
- 7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**
- 7.1 The Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group met on the 2nd March 2022 and considered the Edinburgh Declaration and the principles it embodies and supports the recommendation to Cabinet that the Authority becomes a signatory to the Declaration.
- 8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**
- 8.1 No financial implications are anticipated arising from this report.
- 9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**
- 9.1 The Council has a Biodiversity Duty under S.6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
- 10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT**
- 10.1 The report reflects the priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan and demonstrates a long term and precautionary approach, collaboration between tiers of governance and should encourage stakeholder participation. It should specifically assist the Council in promoting the WFG Act Resilience and Global goals but, because biodiversity is central to human flourishing, should contribute to all the goals in the long term.
- 11. CONCLUSION**
- 11.1 The Edinburgh Declaration strengthens the role of Local Authorities within the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and

in particular, the post 2020 global biodiversity framework being developed at the Conference of the Parties (COP15). Having considered the purpose and scope of the Declaration, the Climate Change Cabinet Steering supports the recommendation to Cabinet that the Council sign the Edinburgh Declaration.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21ST MARCH 2022

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

EDINBURGH DECLARATION

Background papers

None

Officers to contact:

Richard Wistow - Ecologist
Liz Dean - Environment Planner

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 1: Letter from Welsh Government

Julie James AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change
Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

September 2021

Dear

I am writing to invite you to join me in supporting the Edinburgh Declaration: the greater inclusion of the role of local authorities and cities within the post-2020 global biodiversity framework - ensuring transformative change for nature over the coming decade.

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is currently developing a post-2020 framework for global biodiversity and new global targets. We are moving into the next decade with a stepped up ambition to deliver for nature, and there is increasing recognition of the role of local authorities and cities in translating global targets into local delivery.

On behalf of the CBD, the Scottish Government has been leading the “Edinburgh Process” – an online, global engagement and consultation for subnational, regional and local players – with the aim of securing greater reference to the role of subnational and Local Authorities, including cities, in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

Welsh Government supports the Edinburgh Process for biodiversity, and in particular the Edinburgh Declaration, a political statement setting out commitments to implement the post-2020 global biodiversity framework locally. It will ensure people who live in local authorities across Wales can live in harmony with nature and protect valuable local ecosystems for future generations.

Now, more than ever, it is essential to have a healthy and safe natural environment and Welsh Government recognises the vital role local authorities are playing in addressing the impacts of climate change and habitat loss. This framework recognises the increasingly valuable role of subnational governments and local authorities in translating global targets into local delivery.

Through the Edinburgh Declaration we support the call upon CBD Parties to:

- Take the transformative action required to halt biodiversity loss
- Recognise the vital role of subnational and local governments
- Support a dedicated decision on a new Plan of Action for subnational governments, city and local authorities. A decision to be taken at COP15: the Conference of Parties, who signed the UN Convention on Climate Change, and are meeting in China in Autumn 2021 ; and
- Develop a multi-stakeholder platform for the implementation of the post-2020 framework.

I recognise the key role of local authorities in taking forward local level actions for nature and am writing to request your backing for the principles set out in the Edinburgh Declaration. This will demonstrate the global will for a dedicated decision and renewed plan of action for subnational governments and local authorities to be adopted within the post-2020 global biodiversity framework at COP15.

Further information about how to sign up to pledge your support for the Edinburgh Process and Edinburgh Declaration is available at [Edinburgh Declaration on post-2020 global biodiversity framework - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot/Edinburgh-Declaration-on-post-2020-global-biodiversity-framework)

I believe that it is important to encourage a greater involvement of subnational and local authorities internationally within the new framework. I would therefore very much welcome your support.

Yours sincerely

Julie James AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

21 March 2022

UPDATE REPORT ON THE PROPOSED SOLAR FARM

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE ESTATES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

Author(s): David Powell, Director of Corporate Estates and Anthony Roberts, Head of Energy & Carbon Reduction.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide a further update to Members with regards to the work underway in the development of a 'Land Based Solar Farm', to be located on Council owned land that allows a South facing aspect. The facility will, when constructed, be an asset owned by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.
- 1.2 For Cabinet to approve the contents and recommendations of the report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 Members note the contents of this report as part of the ongoing work in response to our climate change ambitions and agree to the further progress of the project proposals, in line with the contents of this report.
- 2.3 Receive further report(s) to provide updates on progress as/when deemed appropriate.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The contents of this report provide contextual information and a key update on this exclusive issue. It provides an update on the proposal where the Council has plans to build and finance a credible solar farm, that will make a vastly significant contribution to the Council's ability to offset its Carbon Footprint, and towards achieving its Net Zero Carbon target.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Corporate Estates Energy team has previously reported on the ongoing work to investigate the potential of using RCT owned land for the development of major renewable energy projects for both wind and solar generation, with the assistance of the Welsh Government Energy Service (WGES). These are projects which would be primarily developed by the Council and as such would both contribute to the increase in the renewable energy provision and carbon reduction in the area, whilst also making a positive economic contribution to the financial situation of the Council, which could then be invested in further related improvements, or other services, for the benefit of citizens.
- 4.2 The name and location of the site has been anonymised at this stage for commercial reasons. Negotiations are in the crucial stages of the process to agree a Power Purchase Agreement / Offtake Contract with a potential partner. The Council has also signed a Non-Disclosure Agreement regarding this sensitive matter.

5. UPDATE ON SOLAR FARM INSTALLATION

5.1 Project Principles:

The project is described as a 6MW Solar Farm and has been given this title because of the combined output of the two 'export aspects' contained within the proposals. Firstly, the magnitude of the grid connection offer that the Council previously accepted from Western Power Distribution, which is set at a maximum of 5MW and to be exported at 33kV. Secondly, the capacity to increase the generation potential for the total size of the solar farm, which takes into account a further export capacity of up to 1MW at the lower voltage of 11Kv, to a potential partner in a local facility, via a private wire arrangement.

As things currently stand, the proposals have three alternative routes we can take, scenarios which can be summarised as follows:

Option 1 is to build the solar farm to take advantage of our secured 5MW grid connection, as a stand-alone entity, that will feed directly into the grid at 33kV and trade the power generated via that sole route.

Option 2 is to combine the setup described above with a private wire arrangement to a local partner, and export to trade at two levels, these being 33kV and 11kV.

Option 3 is to combine both of the above scenarios with the exploration of other opportunities to provide green energy, at a low cost, to future commercial enterprises on a local industrial estate. We hope that this approach will incentivise traditional high energy consumers to relocate to the site, not only for the green energy but also the growth potential of

the site. As part of this process, we will also consider creating a sizeable Electric Vehicle Charging Station, powered partly by the solar farm but with battery storage facilities, initially for use by the council and wider public sector fleet, but also in the longer term for commercial HGVs and private vehicles.

At the time of writing, our proposals and financial models are based on Option 2 above.

5.2 **Looking Back:**

As previously reported in the previous update reports' on 'Key Energy Generation Projects' (presented in June and November), an outline timeline was compiled with the assistance of the WGES. A HV specialist was appointed to advise on the Private Wire and Grid connections, and a Geotechnical / Topographical Specialist to explore, examine, analyse, and report on the ground conditions at the site. Lawyers were also appointed to draft heads of terms for a typical private wire connection arrangement, and WPD have now concluded their report into grid capacity issues at Upper Boat, the result of which does not affect the original terms and conditions of our previously confirmed grid connection offer.

5.3 **Timing of Recommendation:**

The original timeline indicates that the project was due to be elevated to project status later in this financial year, however, with negotiations on the Power Purchase Agreement with a potential partner now reaching a critical stage, we feel that the time is now right to move our outline proposals to the status of a recognised project.

5.4 **Project Proposal Details:**

Considering the reasons given above, the decision to grant project status will then enable the necessary approved systems of governance to be put in place for the continued development of the project, and will enable the Council's appointed team to control, approve and execute spending decisions, both in the continuing development phases (identified within the overall programme) and regarding the collaborative opportunities identified in item 5.1 and 5.3 above.

At the time of writing this report, the headline estimated figures that need to be considered are identified in section 9, however it should also be noted that that the project, if realised, has the potential to 'offset' over 1,500 tonnes of carbon per-annum and approaching 54,000 tonnes over the expected lifecycle of the project.

The committed spend on the project thus far is in the region of £130,000 to maintain progress in line with the identified programme. These costs are an investment towards the feasibility and development stages of this potential project and are covered further in section 9.

Looking forward, the budget estimate for the full development and construction costs for this entire project stands in the region of £6.82million (including all fees).

Periodic updates will be afforded to Members during the progress of the project and further approval will be sought before the project is taken to the next stage of development.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 This supporting report is for the purpose of update and consequently an Equality Impact Assessment is not required in regard to this report.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This supporting report is for the purpose of update and consequently Welsh Language Impact Assessment is not required with regard to this report, however a copy can be made available in Welsh if requested.

8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

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

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 The Council has already had a committed spend in the region of £130,000 to maintain progress in line with the identified programme. This expenditure is funded from existing resources already set aside to support the key energy generation projects.
- 9.2 Looking forward, the budget estimate for the full development and construction costs for this entire project stands in the region of £6.82million (including fees).
- 9.3 It is anticipated that it would be affordable to fund this by use of Prudential Borrowing, with the annual income from the energy generation being sufficient to cover the annual borrowing repayments and the ongoing annual costs and maintenance of the assets. This is subject to a full project report and business case being presented to Cabinet and, if approval is given, a further report to Council to obtain the Prudential Borrowing approval.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report

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

11.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an interim update to Members with regards to the work underway on the development a key renewable energy project and certain other related issues. Any actions that arise in the future, resulting from the recommendations of the report, will be considered by the Council's Cabinet, and with full regard to the seven national wellbeing goals.

12. CONCLUSION

12.1 This report provides contextual information to Members and provides an update on proposals, where the Council has plans to build and finance a credible solar farm and recommends that the proposals be recognised by allocation and approval of full 'Project Status'.

Contact Officers: David Powell 01443 424144 and
Anthony Roberts 01443 281146

This page is intentionally left blank