



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMITTEE SUMMONS

C Hanagan
Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
The Pavilions
Cambrian Park
Clydach Vale CF40 2XX

Meeting Contact: Mrs Sarah Daniel – Senior Democratic Services Officer 07385 086 169

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a meeting of **PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, COMMUNITIES AND PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held **Hybrid** on **THURSDAY, 18TH NOVEMBER, 2021** at **5.00 PM**.

Non Committee Members and Members of the public may request the facility to address the Committee at their meetings on the business listed although facilitation of this request is at the discretion of the Chair. It is kindly asked that such notification is made to Democratic Services by Tuesday, 16 November 2021 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

AGENDA

**Page
No's**

SCRUTINY RESEARCH

A scrutiny research facility is available within the Council Business Unit to support Members' scrutiny responsibilities and their roles as Elected Members. Such research strengthens scrutiny Committees work programmes to ensure outcome-based topics are identified. For any scrutiny research requirements please contact Scrutiny@rhonddacynon-taff.gov.uk

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 previous meeting of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Community Committee held on 23rd September 2021

3 - 8

3. CONSULTATION LINKS

Information is provided in respect of relevant [consultations](#) for consideration by the Committee.

4. BIODIVERSITY AND THE LOCAL NATURE PARTNERSHIP IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

9 - 14

5. HIGHWAYS INFRASTRUCTURE

15 - 24

6. CHAIR'S REVIEW AND CLOSE

To reflect on the meeting and actions to be taken forward.

7. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any items, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Circulation:-

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee
(County Borough Councillor S Bradwick and County Borough Councillor T Williams respectively)

County Borough Councillors:

Councillor A Chapman, Councillor A Fox, Councillor E George, Councillor D Grehan, Councillor G Holmes, Councillor J James, Councillor W Jones, Councillor S Pickering, Councillor G Stacey, Councillor W Treeby, Councillor M Weaver and Councillor J Barton



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, COMMUNITIES AND PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee meeting held virtually on Thursday, 23 September 2021 at 5.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors - Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor S Bradwick (Chair)

Councillor T Williams Councillor A Fox
Councillor E George Councillor D Grehan
Councillor G Holmes Councillor J James
Councillor W Jones Councillor G Stacey
Councillor M Weaver

Officers in attendance:-

Mr S Humphreys, Head of Legal Services
Mr D Batten, Head of Leisure, Parks and Countryside
Ms W Edwards, Service Director – Community Services
Ms C O'Neill, Strategic Arts & Culture Manager
Mr S Owen, Service Director – Streetcare
Mr Nick Kelland – Principal Officer, Libraries
Mrs Sarah Daniel – Senior Democratic Services Officer

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor P Jarman
Councillor A Crimmings

Apologies

Cllr A Chapman
Cllr A Pickering

8 Declaration of Interest

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

9 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 15 July 2021 as an accurate reflection of the meeting, subject to the inclusion of the apologies received from Cllr Weaver and Cllr Holmes

10 Consultation Links

The Senior Democratic Services Officer informed members of the recent consultations that may be of interest to them

11 Scrutiny Research

The Senior Democratic Officer informed Members of the Scrutiny Research facility that was available to members to utilise within the Council Business Unit and members can request to use the facility by emailing the Scrutiny mailbox.

12 Cultural and Heritage Services

The Service Director Community Services and the Head of Leisure, Parks and Countryside presented the report to members to provide an overview of cultural and heritage services in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Members were given a comprehensive overview of the Arts Service, Adult Education Service, Heritage Service and Library Service and included a management structure for each service so members were

The Chairman thanked the officers for the comprehensive report and opened up to members for questions

A member asked if the Aberdare Coliseum theatre was closing as there had been some rumours circulating that this may be the case.

The Service Director responded that this was not true and that the Service area was actually investing in the property, as they were old buildings. She added that a cautious approach to reopening since the pandemic had been taken but it was definitely not closing. Reopening cinema screens would take place from October half term onwards and professional performances would take place from the new year.

A Member asked what happened to the blue plaques if a building is knocked down. He referred to the old cinema in Pontypridd that had a blue plaque on it that was unveiled by a former Councillor.

The Head of Leisure, Parks and Countryside responded that he would look into the Members query and come back to him with an answer.

A Member asked for more information on the Councils review of statues following the Black Lives Matter movement

The officer responded that a recent audit found there to be nothing of issue within the RCT area. He added one query was received in relation to a Kier Hardie statue and around inflammatory comments made, which were responded to and the resident was satisfied with the response provided to them.

A Member asked if the Authority holds any data as to where the people come from that use the theatres in RCT.

The Strategic Arts Manager responded that the Authority uses mosaic software and box data to breakdown the age demographic and advised that most people normally live within a 20 minute journey from the theatres. She added that a lot of information is collected at the point of sale as it was important to know who we are targeting. She further added that they also promote the activities through

their web pages, social media and brochures delivered to other visitor attractions in neighbouring Authority areas.

A member asked for more information on the Eisteddfod that was coming to RCT and asked how they were engaging with communities and who they were targeting for the event.

The Service Director responded that the Authority were co-working with the National Eisteddfod and as part of engagement programme they were considering targeting people who are difficult to reach such as residents that maybe aren't so ready to try something through the medium of welsh.

The Arts Service was also trying to reach out to those that would not normally have an interest in the Arts to try and encourage them see how enjoyable it can be. Eisteddfod officers will work together with RCT Officers to try and ensure that people can see that the Eisteddfod is for all to enjoy and not just for people who speak welsh. A Member suggested that there could be a day for those hard to reach residents where they could attend the Eisteddfod without charge. Officers agreed to explore the option.

A Member referred to a discussion at the Welsh Language Steering Group where members discussed ways the Council would look to promote Welsh history and culture and asked if some more information could be provided to members

The Service Director responded that they were looking at 4 days of promoting welsh history, however the current pandemic had had an impact on the plans but this would be revisited in partnership with the heritage and library teams to get the focus back on a range of heritage links.

The Chair asked for clarification on the ownership on Aberdare and Ynysangharad parks.

The Head of Parks and Leisure advised that Ynysangharad park was donated to the people of Pontypridd back in the 1920's and is held in trust by the Council and there is an Ynysangharad War Memorial Park Cabinet Committee to carry out the role of the trustees. Aberdare Park, predates Ynysangharad Park by 50-60 years and is a grade II plus listed, he added however that Aberdare, does not have same status with the charity commission though

The Chair also asked if leaflets for ZIP World could be placed in Dare Valley Park as on a recent visit there he could not find any there. The Head of Parks and Leisure stated he would feed this back to his team and have leaflets distributed there. The Cabinet Member Environment, Leisure & Heritage Services added that tourism are undertaking a big piece of work to promote the facilities offered by the Council, she advised there will be a hub where all information will be collated so this should resolve the leaflet issues also.

The Chairman wished to put on record the Committees thanks to all staff in the parks departments and the library service for all the digital work for the residents as he considered this to be a very good initiative.

13 Litter Picking -Verbal update

The Service Director Streetcare provided members with an update on how

Communities were able to get involved in Litter picking initiatives throughout the Borough and how RCT works in partnership with Keep Wales Tidy.

He advised that Cerw Cymru, is an all wales initiative that has partnered with all authorities in Wales. RCTCBC are currently working with them on a project to coordinate and encourage residents to link up with their local litter champions.

He advised of some of the challenges for example, a lot of the areas are not part of the Council remit and therefore the focus was on streets, parks and Council owned facilities. He added that the project sources local people to take ownership of the areas with the collaboration working closely with them to assist and support in the delivery of the project. The project also looks at behavioural change projects such as the use of different colour bins and the relocation of bins etc

The Service Director Streetcare advised that there were currently 38 litter champions in RCT with the recruitment through the discretion of the Keep Wales Tidy Officer. Once Litter champions are recruited KWT meet with them to supply them with equipment and insure them which is free of charge for a period of time. In addition to local litter champions there were dozens of community groups affiliated to KWT, whilst others did not want a formal arrangement. He advised that in addition to this, there were also a number of litter hubs who work with RCT where equipment can be booked out for litter picks. He added that this was in place to encourage people who wanted to undertake one off litter picks, to utilise their equipment and coloured bags as they did not want them to use black bags as this could be mistaken for flytipping.

A Member was concerned that some of the areas where he has seen litter pickers are very dangerous, such as the mountain roads. He was concerned at the speed of the traffic, and with no pavements people were putting their lives at risk.

The Service Director Streetcare advised that the Authority and KWT do not condone or encourage any groups to undertake litter picking anywhere near roads that are above 30mph. This is undertaken safely with RCT staff utilising the correct safety equipment and warning signs to slow traffic down. He added that he would speak with KWT ensure this doesn't happen.

The Leader of the Plaid Cymru group was invited to ask a question. She stated that she had great admiration for all those involved in the litter picking groups and thought it to be one of the best systems in RCT for undertaking the collections the way we do. She advised the officer that she remained concerned about residents undertaking litter picking on routes that are hidden away, quiet and countryside routes where drug paraphernalia was often irresponsibly disposed of. She asked if the Authority has any advice or factsheets for the casual litter pickers who may come across the of the drug paraphernalia due to the risk to their health and safety.

The Service Director Streetcare advised that KWT do give advice sheets to groups but this was also something the Authority could look into.

14 Green Waste Collections - Verbal Update

The Service Director Streetcare gave members an update on the rollout to the

changes on the Green Waste Collections. He advised members of the following updates to the service:

- Scheme was launched on the 13.09.2021 online via social media with a 7-week campaign leading up to the 1st November. The first day saw 7000 residents sign up and now just short of 16,000
- As part of the campaign, leaflets to be dropped to “green” areas.
- Crews will specifically leaflet properties
- 95% of those registered done so online.
- Campaign will now target those who do not use online services
- For residents who have not registered, bags will continue to be collected and officers will engage with them to register them.
- Collection frequencies will remain the same.
- Bag deliveries will commence next week, and continue throughout October.

A Member referred to Community gardens where there are people who volunteer to look after them. He asked how they would be managed going forward.

The Service Director Streetcare advised if residents tend to the gardens and take the waste to their house then this will be collected. If, however residents have registered for two bags, then only two will be taken away, this will also serve as a deterrent from stealing bags too. He added that a hard approach was not intended, particularly in the early days. We want to encourage and engage residents in the process.

A Member asked about residents that don't leave their bags out near their houses, for example sometimes they are grouped at the end of a communal driveway. Street and how those collections will be managed.

The Service Director Streetcare advised that that the same collection points will continue and as long as residents register for the new green waste collections then their waste will be collected..

A Member asked if local churches have to register for the green waste collections as they have their grass cut on a regular basis.

The Service Director Streetcare replied they do not have to register and they were working closely with local churches on any changes to the scheme.

A Member asked if compost was able to go in the green waste bags. The Service Director Streetcare advised that this could not be included in the bags but this could be taken to one of the six distribution sites. He added the cleaner the waste, the higher the chance it can be turned into something else. He added that the weight of the bags is also a consideration and that the website had been updated with all the relevant information.

A Member was concerned that when the bags were put out for collection, as they were light they could be blown around and lost or not returned to the correct household.

The Service Director Streetcare advised that a trial had been undertaken and the crews are aware of these issues and will do what is reasonably practical to return the bags to the rightful owners. He added that other options had been explored but as an Authority with so many terraced properties, wheelie bins were not an option and it was not possible to remain with single use plastic. He added

that this is a tried and tested scheme across other Local Authority areas.

A Member asked about residents with restricted mobility and how these are supported for collections.

The Service Director informed members that residents are advised not to put too much in the bags so they were not too heavy. He added that the Authority also undertakes assisted waste collections if required.

The Chairman invited the Leader of the Plaid Cymru group to ask a question of officers.

She referred to the 16,000 people that had registered for the scheme already but was concerned that there were 120,000 households in RCT so there was quite some way to go before this is a sustainable option. The Service Director Streetcare wished to clarify that due to the very nature of the households in RCT, residents presenting green waste is less than 50,000 households as many residents had no gardens or very little outdoor space.

She asked when collections were undertaken would the bags be returned to the kerbside? She was concerned that there are already many obstructions on the kerbside, which was to the detriment of blind and disabled people, and worried about further hazards to them.

The Service Director Streetcare replied that crews have been made aware of these issues and have been encouraged to return the bags as reasonably as possible to prevent further obstructions.

A Member asked about the weight of the bags and if the bags drain if we had heavy rainfall. The Service Director responded that the weight of the bags had not been raised as an issue and the bags will drain during heavy rain. He advised that residents should continue to put their bags out on the evening before collection.

15 Chair's Review and Close

The Chair thanked all members and officers for their attendance and contributions at the meeting.

He asked officers to keep members informed of the progress with the green waste collections so they can understand first hand any of the issues that may be encountered.

The Chairman also advised members that as soon as the Council were able to organise a safe trip to Bryn Pica, members of the Committee would be invited to attend and extended the invite to the Leader of the Plaid Cymru Group also.

16 Urgent Business

None

7.10PM

**CLLR S. BRADWICK
CHAIR.**



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021-22

PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY – COMMUNITIES AND PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18th NOVEMBER 2021

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, PUBLIC HEALTH , PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES

BIODIVERSITY AND THE LOCAL NATURE PARTNERSHIP IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

Author(s): Elizabeth Dean – Environment Planner

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update members on the work of the Council and the Local Nature Partnership in relation to biodiversity in RCT and the future direction of this work.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that members of the Scrutiny Committee:

- 2.1 Note the progress made in RCT in recent years and the increasing importance of biodiversity conservation in the Council's work.
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in depth any further matters.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In 2019 the Wales Government introduced a Biodiversity Duty for all Local Authorities in Wales. The biodiversity duty sets out how the Council aims to incorporate biodiversity considerations into all aspects of its business. This process has become embedded in the corporate performance culture of the Council and whilst much of this is routine, it is also encouraging some innovative projects.

An example is the Pen-y-Cymoedd wind farm which began in 2010 as a cross border planning application with implications for peatbogs, a priority habitat. Local Development Plan Policy AW8 allowed the Local Planning Authority to pursue mitigation from the developer for the impacts and resulted in a 25 year peatbog restoration programme, funded by the developer and managed by an environmental management group including NRW, the developer and both RCT and Neath Port Talbot (NPT) Councils. This led to a successful Heritage Lottery bid by NPT on behalf of both Councils to engage the surrounding communities via the 'Lost Peatlands' project. Following the successful development phase, the full four year programme commenced in summer 2021, with additional funding. The detailed survey work that has been undertaken on the windfarm site has revealed a previously undiscovered population of water voles. These are one of Wales' rarest mammals and appear to be thriving in our wet upland habitats. They have suffered severe population declines in their traditional lowland haunts due to habitat loss and predation by mink. An LNP funded project has also been tracking the migration of nightjar, another rare species that nests in this area. Recently, the value of peatbogs for water and carbon storage has been more widely recognised and Pen-y-Cymoedd is a potential demonstration project for peatbog restoration elsewhere both within RCT and more widely.

- 3.2 Changes to Planning Policy Guidance from Welsh Government (from PPW10 onwards) has also raised the profile of biodiversity in the planning system. This includes new requirements for Green Infrastructure, encompassing biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, that the Council will consider as part of the ongoing review of the [Local Development Plan](#).
- 3.3 In 2020 a [Nature's Assets report](#) was presented to the Council's Cabinet Climate Change Committee and this has led to a number of on-going projects associated with peat-bog restoration opportunities, the carbon storage, water management and biodiversity potential of Council owned land, schools, ancient woodlands and trees more generally. This is in addition to the implementation of the Wildflower Grassland Management Policy and the associated promotion through [Let's Talk Wildflowers | Let's Talk RCTCBC](#) during the summer. Since September, the Council's Ecologist has been supported by a graduate who has already provided invaluable additional capacity to deal with the ecological requirements and components of the planning regime and other important Council work.
- 3.4 The biodiversity work undertaken by the Council, across many departments, draws on the knowledge and expertise of the Council's Ecologist, Parks and Countryside Services as well as statutory bodies like Natural Resources Wales. But it is also heavily dependent on local naturalists and the voluntary conservation sector who provide a wealth of local information, observations and insights that are essential to a sound evidence base. For many years, these organisations and individuals have been contributing to the Local Nature Partnership which was formerly known as the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership.
- 3.5 The new name originated with new funding from Welsh Government via the ENRAW programme which, in part, replaced former Countryside Council for Wales funding. This funding, to 24 Local Nature Partnerships across Wales (Local Authority or National Park areas), was for three years from April 2019 to March 2022 and is administered by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) for the Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP). The funding supported the appointment of Local Nature Partnership Co-

ordinators for each area to reinvigorate community engagement with nature, together with a small project fund to assist with actions on the ground. In RCT we share an officer with Neath Port Talbot LNP who has brought a wealth of expertise and has supported the Partnership to attract new members and to continue to develop. <https://www.facebook.com/NPTWildlife>

- 3.6 One of the main tasks of the RCT LNP has been to update the 'Action for Nature' plan first produced in 2000 and updated in 2009. Although most meetings have been held on-line, a monthly schedule of species and habitat discussions have drawn on the assembled expertise and we are on schedule to produce a draft for wider consultation in the next few months. Members of the partnership are responsible for a wide range of positive action for biodiversity in RCT including management of special sites, public engagement and training and monitoring and recording.
- 3.7 The project funding that was initially intended to spend on public events associated with the production of the 'Action for Nature' plan has been redirected to support small scale partners projects. This includes bird nesting and survey projects run by the local BTO group, equipment for use by the LNP such as bat detectors and camera traps, a Nightjar migration monitoring project and support for the Welsh Government Woodland Estate project.
- 3.8 From the outset Welsh Government has expressed an interest in the work the Partnerships across Wales were undertaking and from April 2020, allocated capital funding under the name 'Local Places for Nature' for specific 'modest measures' as laid out in the manifesto of the First Minister, to promote biodiversity in communities. The table below shows the capital allocations to the RCT LNP and the projects it has been spent on.

Year	LNP outturn	Environmental Growth on your Doorstep Plan	Greening the Public Estate Plan	Examples of capital assets acquired in year	Examples of the natural assets, created, restored or enhanced.
20/21	£ 87,003	Enhance nature on at least 70 hectares of wildflower meadow, wetland, open space and grass verges incl. 10 ha of grassland, much of which is small, urban or roadside grassland spaces which are more difficult to access by traditional machinery.	The Trees for Parks project will facilitate the planting of trees in 17 appropriate parks and cemeteries across RCT.	1 Amazone cut and collect machine. 350 trees	350 trees planted. 120 hectares of wildflower grassland now managed.
21/22	£145,000 capital plus £20,000 revenue (additional staff time from staff hosted with NPT Council)	Green Roof Classrooms; delivering up to 8 Green roof classrooms on school sites with little or no access to nature	Let Nature Grow; Community growing area in Ynysangharad War Memorial Park and a cut and collect machine to expand on last years project	Additional cut and collect machine. Up to 8 green roof classrooms.	Additional hectareage of grassland managed for biodiversity. Green roofs in schools.

This Fund has played a major role in enabling RCT to deliver its wildflower grass management policy through the purchase of two Amazone ‘cut and collect’ machines over the last two years thus allowing more verges and grassed areas to be added to the list of sites managed for wildflowers. The smaller equipment is complementary to an existing machine which had been purchased through grant funding several years earlier. We have also been able to purchase and plant over 300 trees in our parks, cemeteries and recreation grounds in 2020 throughout RCT as well as current work on delivering a community garden project at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park and green-roofed outdoor classrooms for schools with little access to greenspace.

- 3.9 This fund aims to drive significant change in the way public services work, ensuring that meaningful changes are made to improve the local environment for people and nature, driving a green recovery. The funding is intended to support Councils and other public bodies to make significant changes and be aspirational in delivery, particularly through capital works and looking at delivering multiple benefits (e.g. air quality improvements, drainage, biodiversity) for people and nature. The projects that have been taken forward in RCT have demonstrated the multi-disciplinary collaboration, cross departmental working, acceptance that there will be ongoing responsibilities for sustaining positive outcomes.
- 3.10 Whilst we cannot foresee what Welsh Government propose for future funding, their Programme for Government following the election, their declaration of a Nature

Emergency and the recent statement on 'biodiversity and Local Places for Nature' by the Minister for Climate Change to the Senedd [Senedd.tv - Plenary - 12/10/2021](https://www.senedd.tv/plenary/12/10/2021) suggest this remains a priority.

- 3.11 The current ENRAW funding for the LNP co-ordinators ends in March next year and in addition, RCT will lose the support of our experienced co-ordinator in advance of this as she has secured a role with NPT CBC. This will leave the RCT LNP in a difficult position with regard to any possible future funding that may be announced later this year. The current LNP co-ordinator will be able to provide support to develop a possible bid but not to follow through and implement it if funding is forthcoming.
- 3.12 The Cabinet has recently approved an outline of the pilot of 29 sites for a [Living Landscapes](#) project in Rhondda Cynon Taf that can be delivered either within existing resources or in anticipation of any potential funding opportunities that may arise and require spending over a short period of time. The Living Landscape project provides a mechanism for linking sites of nature conservation value to their local communities, with the support of the statutory and voluntary conservation organisations. The appointment of two biodiversity apprentices from September 2021 provides an opportunity to undertake practical works on these sites utilising supervision and training input from established staff, including the LNP co-ordinator and the graduate ecologist.

4. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

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

5. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no Welsh language implications arising from this report.

6. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 6.1 The function of the Local Nature Partnership is to engage and involve all those with an interest in nature conservation in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Co-ordinator's post and the support from WCVA and the Wales Biodiversity Partnership has been instrumental in diversifying and developing the range of participants and the ways in which they can become engaged.
- 6.2 This is of benefit to the Council, as well as the participants and the natural world. Our knowledge and evidence base improves, the concerns and aspirations of a diverse range of stakeholders are better understood and a huge amount of practical work is taken forward.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 No legal implications are anticipated.

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

- 9.1 This report contributes to a wide range of the Council's priorities as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan for 2020 to 2024. Specifically, it contributes to investing in our greenspaces and to delivering natural carbon storage solutions such as those provided by trees, peat bogs, marshy grassland and other natural habitats across the County Borough to enhance air quality and reduce the impact of greenhouse gasses.
- 9.2 It also reflects the five ways of working in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Biodiversity work must be based on long-term considerations and is focused on preventative and precautionary action. It seeks to integrate biodiversity and ecosystem resilience (including carbon, water and community benefits) into projects across the Council to realise multiple benefits for local residents and wildlife. The Local Nature Partnership provides a valuable mechanism for involving all the relevant stakeholders and promote collaboration.
- 9.3 Biodiversity work contributes specifically to the Resilience and Global Responsibility goals of the Act but in the longer term it could have implications for all the goals

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 Consideration of biodiversity has become an important and cross cutting component of the work of this Council. This report draws Members attention to the progress that has been made to date by the Local Nature Partnership in facing increasing demands and opportunities in this vital area of work.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021/22

**PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY,
COMMUNITIES & PROSPERITY
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

18th NOVEMBER 2021

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF
FRONTLINE SERVICES**

Agenda Item No: 5

**HIGHWAYS INFRASTRUCTURE
UPDATE**

Author: Andrew Griffiths – Service Director Highways & Engineering

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee with an update on the highway infrastructure within the County Borough.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the update on highways infrastructure within the County Borough with particular reference to the asset management strategy and investment strategy.
- 2.2 Note the expenditure required to maintain the highway infrastructure asset.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The highways infrastructure is the single biggest asset that the Council owns, valued at £3.2billion (2021 gross replacement cost).
- 3.2 The highways infrastructure consists of:

- 1,295km of carriageways
- 1,159km of footways
- 1,567 highway structures including 196 road bridges
- 29,404 streetlights
- 134 traffic signals (signalised junction and pedestrian crossings)

Plus surface water sewer systems and road gullies, miscellaneous street furniture, signs, bollards, vehicle barriers, pedestrian barriers, etc.

- 3.3 A Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) sets out a structured approach to managing the highway asset based around the following core elements:
- Hierarchy
 - Inspection
 - Defect
 - Repair
 - Programmed Repairs
 - Planned Maintenance
- 3.4 The first HAMP was published and then updated by the Council in 2012 and since that year the Council has utilised this and the evidence from the inspections to undertake a capital programme of works.
- 3.5 The UK Roads Liaison Group published guidance in 2016 – “Well Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice” which is supported, endorsed and recommended by key organisations including Department for Transport and County Surveyors Society Wales (CSSW). The Code of Practice promotes a risk-based approach to inspection and maintenance.
- 3.6 In 2019 CSSW published Highway Asset Management Planning: Recommended Practices which contains the practices that CSSW recommends to local authorities to apply.
- 3.7 The CSSW document recommends that the HAMP is produced no later than every 5 years and an Annual Status Report (ASOR) is produced on an annual basis with both documents helping the authority to identify works programmes and priorities.

4. UPDATE / CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Due to the extensive investment in the highway infrastructure, with delivery a priority, the COVID pandemic and lack of staff resources (which has been recently resolved) a new HAMP and ASOR will now be upgraded.
- 4.2 Historically, the Council has successfully obtained funding from the Welsh Government (WG) for funding in its highway infrastructure via Local Government Borrowing Initiative, Highways Refurbishment Capital Grant and Local Government Roads Maintenance Grant. The Council in accordance with its predecessor Corporate Plan and the current Corporate Plan have recognised the

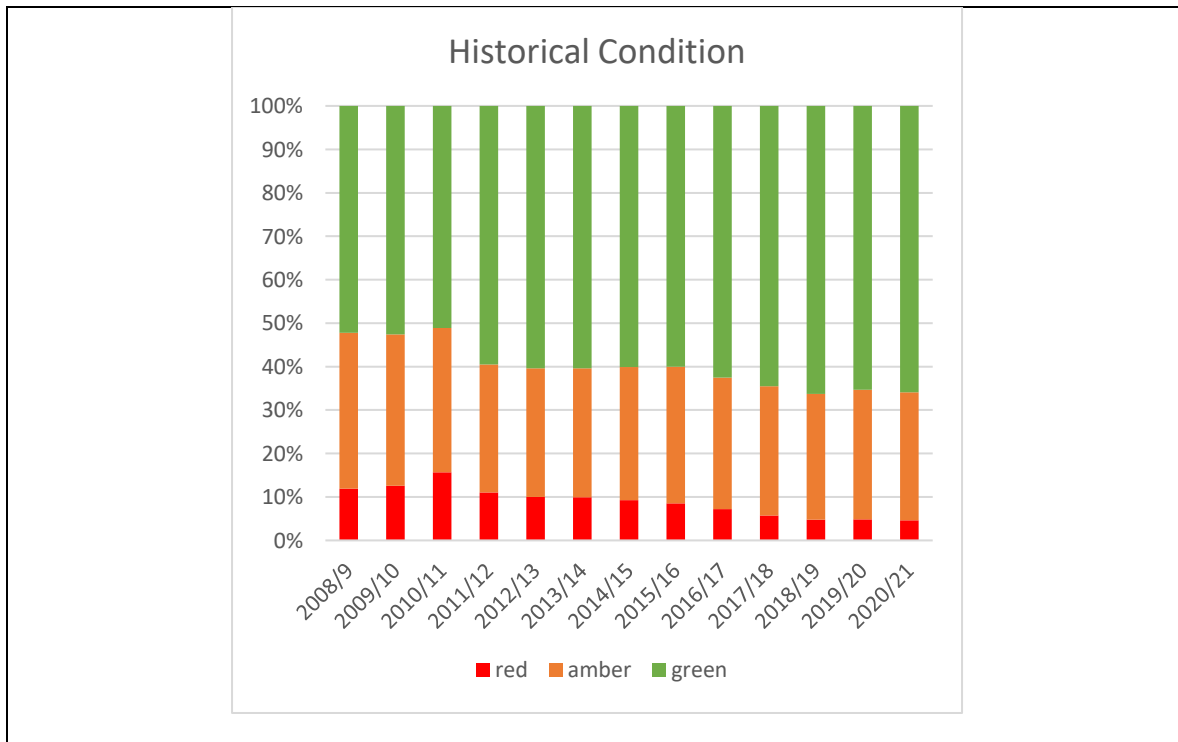
importance of the highways infrastructure asset and has made sustained and enhanced asset investment via its RCTInvest programme.

- 4.3 The Infrastructure Asset Management Group staff resources has increased since 2015 in order to deal with the important highways infrastructure asset. A dedicated structures team is now in place which undertakes the general and principal inspections of the structures without having to outsource this resource to deal with it, thus making it more efficient and less costly. The traffic signals management has also been taken back inhouse from consultants and this has again improved efficiency and costs for the service.
- 4.4 Due to the extensive funding, the condition of the highway assets has improved. This has resulted in the following:
- **Investment in A class roads.** The amount of A class roads in a poor condition is 4.6%, while this is 0.68% worse than the Wales Median of 3.92% it is an improvement of 0.1% from last year.
 - **Investment in B class roads.** The amount of B class roads in a poor condition is 5.9%, while this is 1.43% worse than the Wales Median of 4.47% it is an improvement of 0.1% from last year.
 - **Investment in C class roads.** The amount of C class roads in a poor condition is 3.4%, 10.61% better than the Wales Median of 14.01%, an improvement of 0.6% from last year.
 - **Investment in U class roads.** The amount of U class roads in condition band 4 is 5.64%, with 20.32% in condition band 3. It was anticipated that as part of the current investment programme the percentage in condition band 4 will be reduced to >6.5% which has already been achieved and the condition band 3 reduced to below 20% which is expected to be achieved in the current financial year.
- 4.5 As a result of the investment in the highways infrastructure assets the amount of third party claims has reduced considerably from 446 in 2012/13 to 158 in 2020/21.
- 4.5 All street lighting has now been converted to LED units. All concrete columns have now been replaced within the borough and the authority continues to maintain a testing and replacement programme for street lighting columns as part of its highway infrastructure asset management strategy. The Authority continues to replace its lit bollards with unlit bollards with 461 remaining to be replaced out of a total of 636. Lit signage has been steadily replaced with LED units on the signage / poles with 2,300 out of 3,800 converted to date.
- 4.6 Unfortunately, our bridge stock is in poor condition. Our average bridge condition indicator is 75.96% having improved slightly from a figure of 75.36% (two years ago). This trend is likely to continue over the forthcoming years as the number of inspections continues to rise. It should also be noted that the condition of our bridges has improved from 57% in 2012/13. Having enhanced our bridge

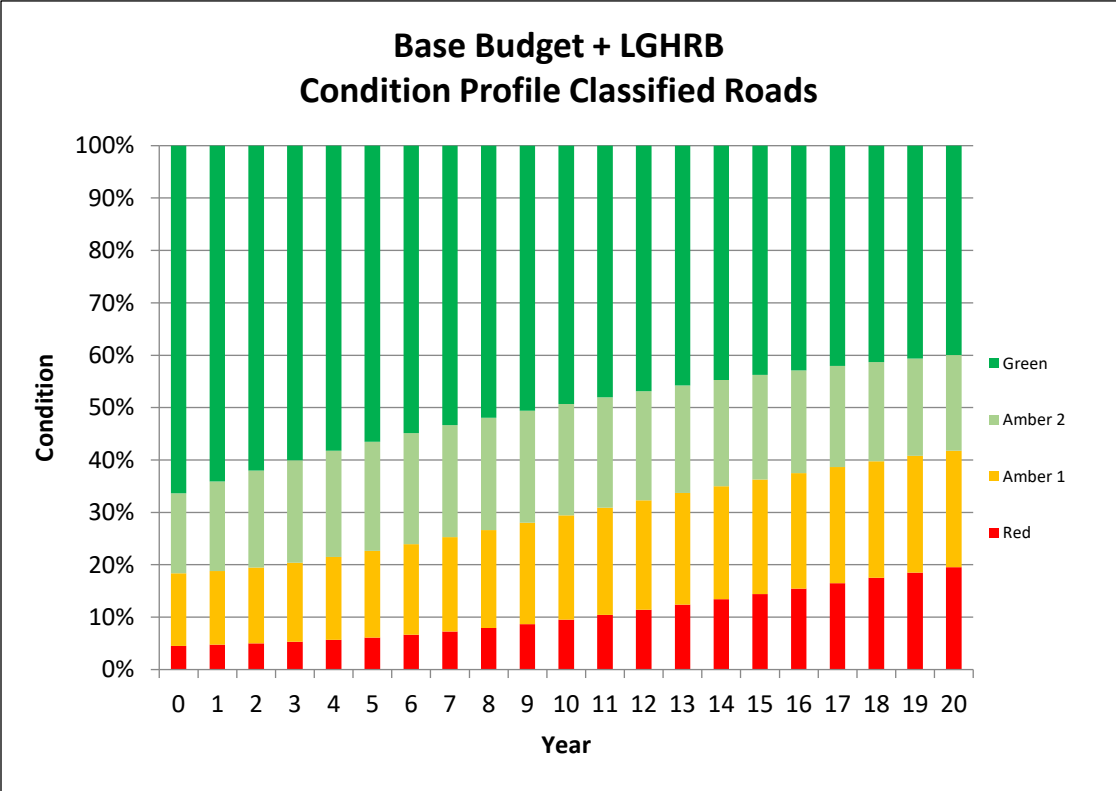
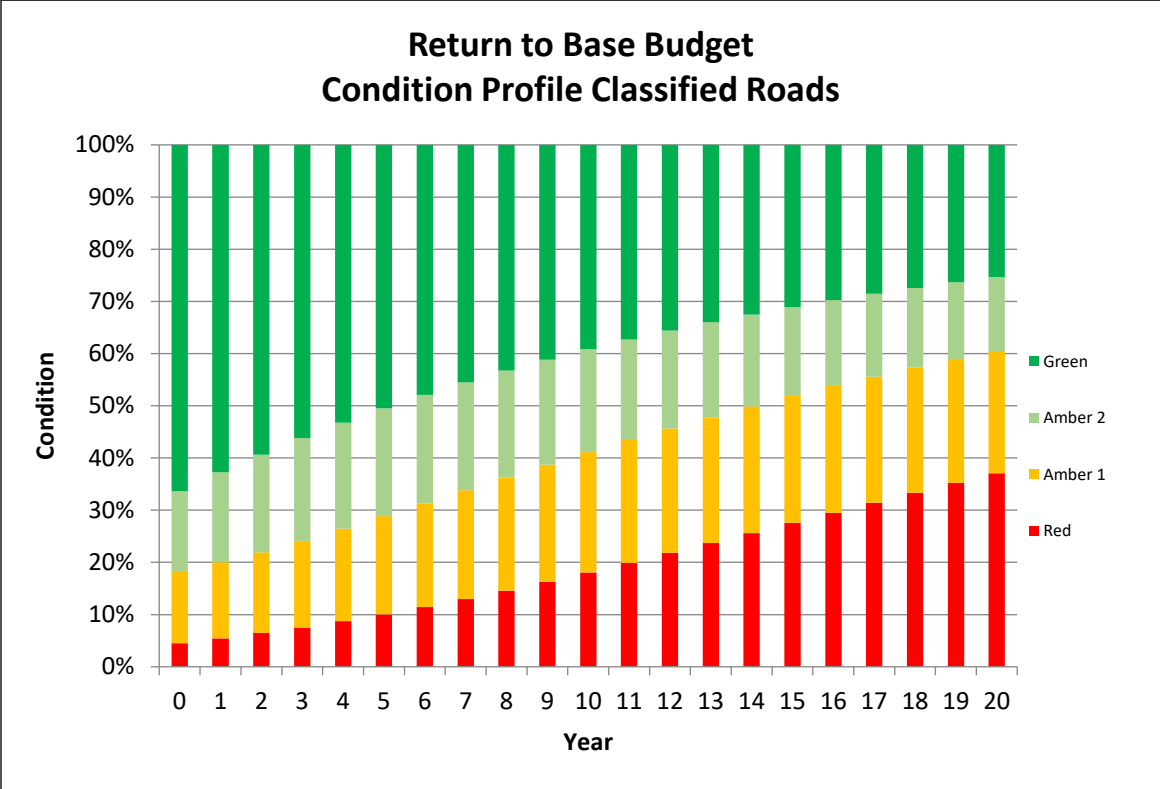
inspection regime, we are now in a much better position to effect early interventions, which reduce the long-term financial liability on our structures.

5. INVESTMENT STRATEGY

- 5.1 The Council’s strategy for investment in highways in the short term is to continue to invest to improve the asset for the next 2 years. It is then hoped that investment will continue at a level suitable to maintain a steady state condition in the medium term although it is uncertain whether long term funding at this level will be available.
- 5.2 It is estimated that funding provided by the Highways Refurbishment Grant along with the Council’s investment will enable the condition of the carriageways to improve beyond the target condition within the next 3 years.
- 5.3 Classified road condition has improved dramatically in the last 10 years. Prior to the beginning of the Council’s Highway Improvement Scheme in 2011, the network was deteriorating. Since 2011 the condition has been improving due in part to LGBI investment (2012/13 to 2014/15) and LGPHRG. However, without continued investment at or above the steady state projection deterioration will resume.

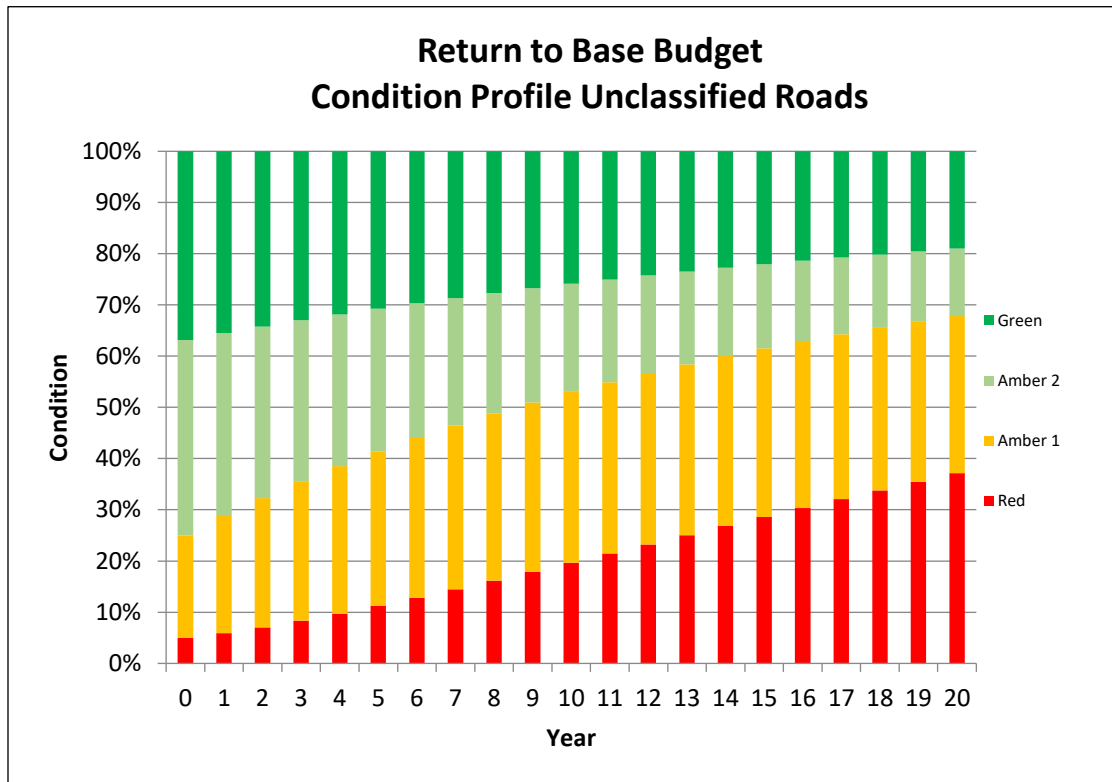


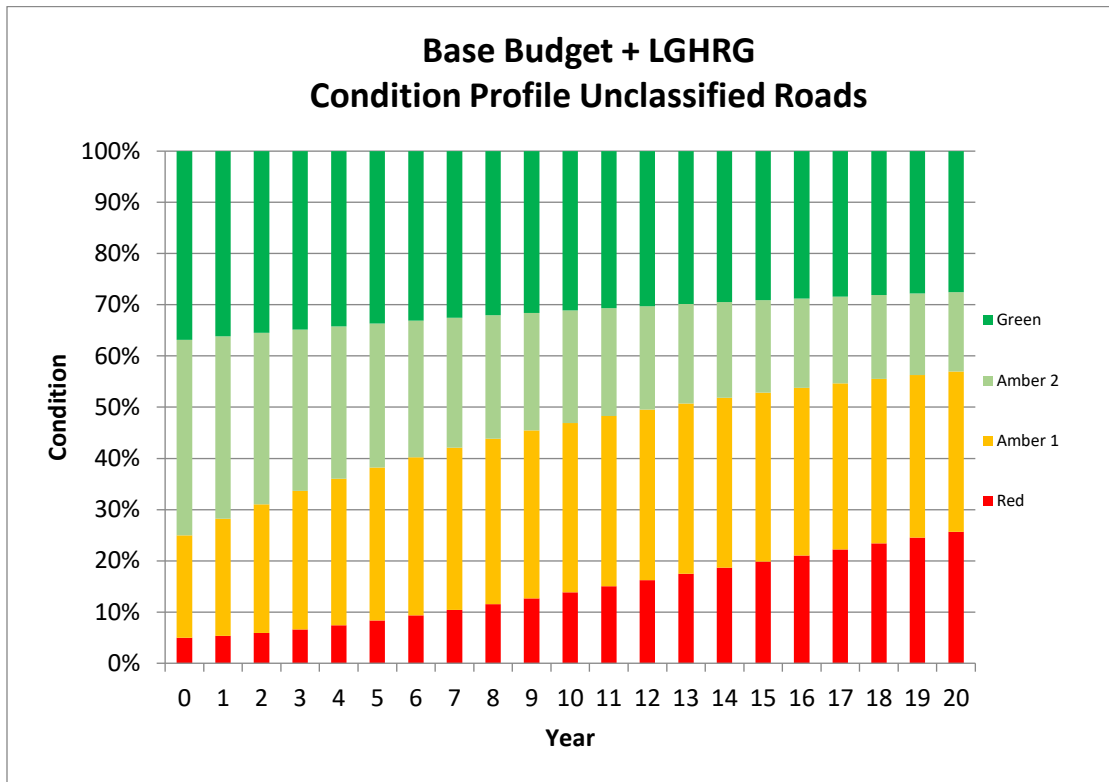
- 5.4 Condition projections for highways need to be made over an extended time period. The tables below project the condition of the classified and unclassified road networks for 20 years based on a continuation of current Council funding levels with and without the continuation of the Highway Refurbishment Grant.



5.5 For the purposes of condition projection, it has been assumed that Council HRG the classified network will deteriorate considerably more with almost double

the amount funding levels will return to the base budget. As can be seen without a continuation of the network being in the RED condition and small increase in the amount in the AMBER condition by year 20. This equates to approximately an additional 75km of the classified network being in the red or amber condition bands, with the majority of this in the red band.





- 5.6 For the purposes of condition projection, it has been assumed that Council funding levels will return to the base budget level in 22/23 following the current 3-year investment programme. For unclassified roads the difference is less pronounced than classified roads as following a return to base budgets expenditure would have to be targeted more at classified roads than unclassified. However, an extra 12% or 110km of the network would be in the red band with the amber bands remaining approximately constant
- 5.7 The Council has invested in the repair of its structural assets including road bridges, footbridges, culverts and retaining walls. Currently there are 170 highway structures on the Council’s priority list that require intervention to repair / prevent further deterioration. Some of these structures require repairs whilst others require replacement of critical members to the structures.
- 5.8 The Infrastructure Asset Management team are also responsible for the parks structural assets and the team are still currently still evaluating the extent and number of all the assets within the borough formally controlled by Parks. The structures that have been inspected and assesses to date are currently in a worse condition than the highway structural assets.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no negative or adverse equality or diversity implications associated with this report. However, it should be noted that lack of sustained enhanced investment within the highway infrastructure could lead to potential problems for people with mobility issues.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 There are no consultation implications aligned to this report.

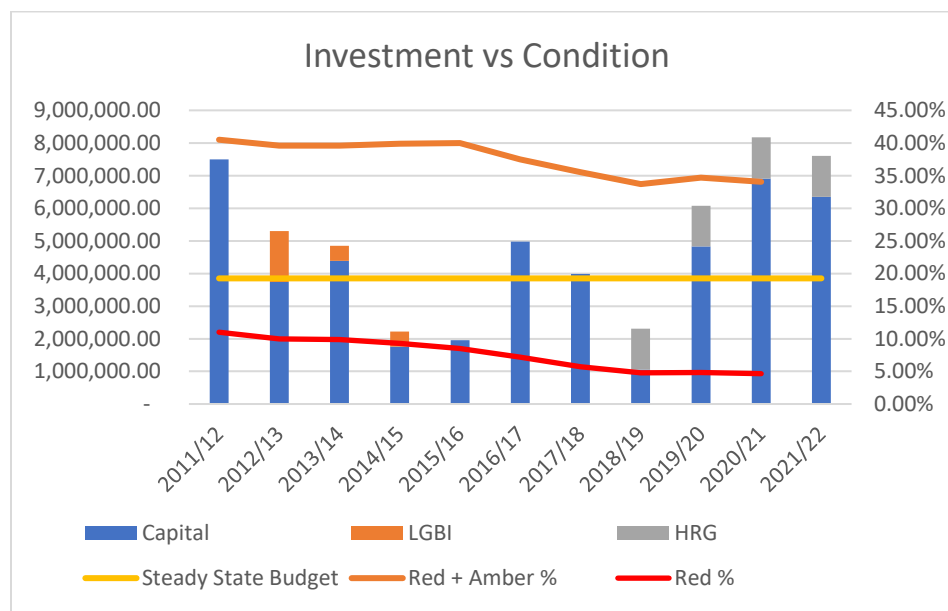
8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 Between 2012/13 – 2014/15 the Council has secured £11.304m from WG via its Local Government Borrowing Initiative to invest in highway infrastructure assets.

8.2 Between 2017/18 – 2021/22 the Council has secured £6.912m from WG via its Highways Refurbishment Capital Grant.

8.3 The Council secured £756,621 from WG in 2020/21 via its Local Government Roads Maintenance Revenue Grant.

8.4 Between October 2015 to September 2021 the Council has invested £49.574m in its highway infrastructure assets ie carriageways, structures, park structures, etc.



8.5 The above graph summarises capital investment in carriageways since 2011/12 and the change in condition brought about by that investment.

8.6 The estimated steady state renewals investment requirement for A, B & C

classified carriageways is £3.850M per annum. This doesn't include unclassified carriageways, structures, etc.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 Under Section 41(1) of the Highways Act 1980, the Council as Highway Authority has a duty to maintain the highway, to keep the fabric of the highway in such good repair as to render its physical condition safe for ordinary traffic to pass at all seasons of the year.
- 9.2 The Active Travel Act 2013 requires continuous improvement to our Active Travel infrastructure.

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

- 10.1 The highway strategy and investment is in accord with the Council's Corporate Plan i.e. PLACES – where people are proud to work, live and play – keeping the County Borough moving, including improvements to roads and pavements and public transport, whilst also improving air quality. This will be delivered by continuing to improve the condition of our roads and pavements and investing in our bridges, retaining walls and sustainable flood drainage systems.
- 10.2 This strategy is in accord with the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 in particular the national well-being goal of A More Prosperous Wales by keeping people and traffic moving on well maintained roads and pavements and progressing schemes that will benefit communities now and in the future.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 Without sustained levels of investment at, or above the projected steady state figure, the carriageway network will be subject to ongoing deterioration. This would result in increased sums being expended on inefficient small scale reactive repairs and third-party claims pay-outs, less efficient networks with longer journey times and increased levels of pollution.
- 11.2 As can be seen from the graphs earlier, without sustained levels of both Council and HRG investment, the network condition would return to a deteriorating state.
- 11.3 While it is not yet known whether the Council will be able to sustain any funding above the base budget level beyond its current 3-year investment programme, it is hoped that in the medium-term additional funding will be made available. It is however, very unlikely, even with a continuation of HRG, that steady state funding will be available in the long term.

- 11.4 If Council funding returns to base budgets, without HRG funding the network would deteriorate at an ever increasing rate with an additional 185km of the network being in the RED and AMBER condition bands after 20 years compared to the condition achieved through base council funding combined with a continuation of HRG.
- 11.5 Whilst the condition of our highways network is expressed within this report in technical terms, the practical implications of poor highway conditions should not be forgotten, nor should the poor public perceptions that are associated with having a failing network. Potholes are obvious and recognisable features of a highway in poor condition as are the impacts on car users. However, the impact on walkers and cyclists is even more significant, particularly against the backdrop of the Active Travel Act 2013 which requires continuous improvement in active travel infrastructure.
- 11.6 Investment is also needed to continue in highway structures and park structures to maintain the longevity of the asset and also ensure that the assets are inspected and maintained at an appropriate time to minimise expenditure.