



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

A hybrid meeting of the CABINET will be held on  
Monday, 12th December, 2022 at 1.00 pm

Contact: Hannah Williams - Council Business Unit (Tel No. 07385401954)

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, 8 December 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](mailto:ExecutiveandRegulatoryBusinessUnit@rctcbc.gov.uk)

It is the intention to live stream this meeting, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

**ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

**1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

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

Note:

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

**2. MINUTES**

To receive the minutes of the Cabinet Committee on the 29th November 2022 as an accurate record.

**3. CABINET WORK PROGRAMME**

To receive the report of the Service Director Democratic Services and Communication on updates to the Cabinet Work Programme.

**(Pages 11 - 34)**

**4. COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS - LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES AND SECOND HOMES**

To receive the report of the Director of Finance and Digital Services, Director of Prosperity and Regeneration and Director of Public Health and Community Services on the results of the public consultation which it agreed to initiate in respect of the introduction of a Council Tax Premium on long term empty properties and second homes in the County Borough.

**(Pages 35 - 70)**

**5. SUPPORT TO REFUGEES, UKRAINE NATIONALS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN RCT**

To receive the report of the Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services which outlines the support being provided by the Council to refugees, Ukraine nationals and asylum seekers in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) and the considerable work undertaken by the Council and our partner organisations, to respond positively and as effectively as possible across all the resettlement schemes.

**(Pages 71 - 86)**

**6. TO CONSIDER PASSING THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION:**

“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 paragraphs 12 and 13 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act”.

**7. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM STRUCTURE**

To receive the report of the Chief Executive, which seeks Cabinet approval for revisions to the Council's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) post structure.

**(Pages 87 - 114)**

**8. URGENT ITEMS**

To consider any urgent business as the Chairman feels appropriate.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Robert A. ...". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

**Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication**

**Circulation:-**

**Councillors:** Councillor A Morgan (Chair)  
Councillor M Webber (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor G Caple  
Councillor A Crimmings  
Councillor R Lewis  
Councillor C Leyshon  
Councillor M Norris  
Councillor B Harris

**Officers:** 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  
Paul Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services  
Christian Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Derek James, Service Director – Prosperity & Development  
Paul Mee, Chief Executive  
David Powell, Director of Corporate Estates  
Andy Wilkins, Director of Legal Services  
Neil Elliott, Director of Adult Services



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

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

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday, 29 November 2022 at 1.00 pm.

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

Councillor A Morgan (Chair)

Councillor M Webber    Councillor G Caple  
Councillor A Crimmings    Councillor R Lewis  
Councillor C Leyshon    Councillor B Harris

#### **Officers in attendance**

Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services  
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services  
Ms L Davies, Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services  
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development  
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services  
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Mr P Mee, Chief Executive  
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates  
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services  
Mr A Critchlow, Parking Services and Streetworks Manager  
Mr S Owen, Service Director – Streetcare  
Mr A Stone, Head of Flood Risk Management and Strategic Projects  
C Emery, Interim Head Of Community Safety and Community Housing

**Two members of the public were also in attendance.**

#### **79 Welcome and Apology**

The Leader welcomed attendees to the meeting of the Cabinet and an apology for absence was received from the Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity.

#### **80 Declaration of Interest**

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

#### **81 Service Review of the Community Meals Service**

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services provided Cabinet with the report which assessed the Council's Community Meals Service and sought permission to consult on the future of the service.

The Director spoke of the options for consideration of alternative ways of meeting the nutritional needs of the most vulnerable residents in RCT and how the Council could continue to provide the appropriate support for the future.

The Director recommended Cabinet approve the third option, which would consist of providing service users with a choice of either a hot or frozen meal delivery service, which service users could order through a central point of contact within the Council. The frozen meals would be purchased by the Council through a third-party supplier and stored at the central meal kitchen. Part of this option would also entail a proposed price increase of £0.50 to service users, which would increase the price of the meal from £4.05 to £4.55. This would generate potential additional full year income of £0.063M.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language spoke of the challenging financial situation across all service areas and was in support of consulting upon Option 3. The Cabinet Member noted that RCT CBC was one of few Local Authorities in Wales to offer a community meals service and stated that Option 3 would allow the Council to maintain the service for users, allow greater flexibility for residents and makes the service more sustainable. The Cabinet Member also noted that staff would continue to provide a welfare check to service users during the weekdays, supporting social care for the most vulnerable using the service.

The Cabinet Member moved the recommendations with the following additional recommendation in place of 2.3 of the report: *'Subject to 2.2 above, we agree to receive a further report summarising the results and feedback from the consultation process to determine whether Cabinet wishes to proceed with the proposal or not.'*

The Deputy Leader acknowledged the importance of the service but recognised that all service areas needed review due to the substantial rise in costs faced by the Local Authority. The Deputy Leader was in support of Option 3, to retain the service and allow hot meals to continue for the most vulnerable in the community. The Deputy Leader added that despite the proposed price increase of £0.50, it remained competitive in comparison to neighbouring Local Authorities and private providers.

The Leader was also in support of the third option as it would maintain the valued service and provide clients with an option to have a frozen meal, which may be better suited for those who wish to eat later. The Leader spoke of one neighbouring Local Authority which charges £6 and explained that the preferred option would total £4.55.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the content of the report;
2. To initiate a consultation on Cabinet's preferred service change proposal of Option 3, in respect of the Community Meals Service, as outlined in section 5.4 of the report; and
3. To receive a further report summarising the results and feedback from the consultation process to determine whether Cabinet wishes to proceed with the proposal or not.

**N.B- Following the determination of this item, the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language left the meeting.**

**82 Commencement of the Authority's Review of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan**

The Head of Flood Risk Management and Strategic Projects advised the Cabinet of the requirements to review and produce a revised Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan (formerly known as a Flood Risk Management Plan), as required under Section 10 of the Flood and Water Management Act (FWMA) 2010. Furthermore, the officer advised Members of the program of work required to deliver the review of the LFRMS and Action Plan, in accordance with the statutory timeframe stipulated by Welsh Government.

The Leader welcomed the report and was in support of the recommendations, which fit with the Council's wider Flood Risk Management Strategy and the expectations of Welsh Government. The Leader explained that many internal reviews and investigations had been undertaken following the likes of Storm Dennis. The Leader stated that RCT had the highest surface flood risk across Wales and that the review would help levy future funding, which is allocated across Wales based on risk assessment and need.

The Deputy Leader spoke in support of the recommendations and commented that although the Strategy was statutory, there was no legal obligation to carry out the consultation. The Deputy Leader spoke of the importance of consulting with residents to help eliminate fear.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To commence the review of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan; and
2. To note the indicative timescales, actions and reports being brought to Cabinet and Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in Appendix 1.

## **83 Waste Services - Revised Waste Management Strategy**

The Head of Streetcare Services outlined proposals for revisions to the Council's operational waste management processes with a view to considering future arrangements for the collection of refuse and recycling designed to aid an increase in the rate of recycling across RCT which will also deliver financial efficiencies; and sought Cabinet's approval to initiate a consultation exercise in respect of the options for change as presented in the report.

With the agreement of the Leader, two Members of the public spoke on the item and put forward their views to Cabinet Members.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure spoke of the Council's current recycling rate of 67.48% and the need to increase it to the Welsh Government target of 70% by 2025. The Cabinet Member spoke of the six Local Authorities, which already have a positive record of refuse collection on a three-weekly basis and felt that there should be very little to place in black bin waste, given RCT collect food, nappies and recycling on a weekly basis. The Cabinet Member welcomed the proposals, which would have benefits in terms of recycling, costs and lowering the carbon footprint.

The Leader and Members took the opportunity to thank the speakers for their contribution and emphasised that if agreed, the proposals would be subject to consultation. In response to the points made by the speakers, the Leader stated that all of RCT's plastic was recycled. In addition to the six Local Authorities

currently collecting refuse on a three-weekly basis, the Leader stated that it was likely many more would consider the move as part of the difficult budget setting process.

The Leader spoke of concerns raised in respect of the potential increase in pests and explained that there was no evidence for this, which had been independently verified; and spoke of Conwy Council, which collect refuse on a four-weekly basis, as an example. The Leader emphasised the importance of recycling and explained that evidence suggests that if done correctly, only 20% of the weekly waste should go in the black bag.

In terms of the trial of the reusable bags, the Leader had reservations about whether it would be a challenge in a typical terrace street and welcomed the opportunity for consultation and a trial.

The Deputy Leader echoed the Leader's comments and noted that the Council purchased 30.2 million single use bags during 2021/22, at a cost of £877k. In addressing the comments of the speakers, the Deputy Leader emphasised that the need for service changes was a result of the budget gap due to the lack of funds from central government. The Deputy Leader stated that staff were the Council's greatest asset and the need to prioritise jobs.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report and duly resolve to initiate a public consultation and engagement exercise on the option for change, namely:
  - (i) The collection of residual household waste on a 3-weekly basis for all domestic waste collections.
  - (ii) Presentation of waste on a 3-weekly basis will be as follows; strict volume control measures will apply to all domestic waste, namely:
    - (a) a maximum of 3 black bags per household, (for those properties with existing black bag waste collections),
    - (b) no side waste rule continues for those households with large wheelie bin collections; and
2. To initiate a trial of the use of reusable recycling sacks for the collection of dry mixed recycling, (DMR); and
3. That feedback from the consultation/ engagement activity and the trial are each reported back to Cabinet in order for Cabinet to determine whether, and if so how, they would wish to proceed with the option for change.

**This meeting closed at 1.45 pm**

**Cllr A Morgan  
Chairman.**





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

### **CABINET**

**12<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2022**

#### **CABINET WORK PROGRAMME: 2022- 23 MUNICIPAL YEAR.**

#### **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL.**

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

- 1.1 To present, for Cabinet Members' comment and approval, an update on the Cabinet Work Programme on the proposed list of matters requiring consideration by Cabinet over the 2022-23 Municipal Year. The Work Programme will guide and direct the activities of other arms of the Council, as well as the Cabinet itself.

##### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet approve the Work Programme for the 2022-23 Municipal Year (with appropriate amendment where necessary) and receive a further update on a 3 monthly basis.

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

- 3.1 At the Council AGM on the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2022, it was agreed that going forward a detailed Cabinet Work Programme be published for a 6 month period, allowing sufficient notice and opportunity for consultation and / or pre scrutiny. Amendments to paragraph 12.1 (Part 4) of the Council's Constitution were amended to reflect this position, although still allowing updated versions of the programme to be provided on a 3 monthly cycle to the Cabinet.
- 3.2 The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, provides that information about forthcoming executive decisions must be made available to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to ensure these Committees are best informed to undertake and better plan their work. Although the Council are already well placed in respect of this duty, it is important to ensure the development of an accurate and robust

Cabinet work programme, outlining consideration of Key Decisions which will strengthen the robust Governance arrangements intended to be taken forward.

- 3.3 The updated Work Programme is attached to this report for Members' consideration and covers the 2022-23 Municipal Year.
- 3.4 For ease of reference the work programme will also be available on the main Cabinet [webpage](#) for Members and members of the public information.

#### **4. CABINET REPORTS**

- 4.1 The proposed work programme is a rolling work programme for the 2022-23 Municipal Year, which is reported to Cabinet on a 3 month cycle to allow for regular updates and amendments.
- 4.2 An updated work programme is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 4.3 During the period outlined, the Work Programme may be subject to further change to take into account any additional/deletion reports, including any new consultative documents or legislative initiatives from the Welsh Government, which require urgent attention.
- 4.4 In accordance with paragraph 2.5 (Part 4) of the Council's Constitution, any Member of the Council may also request the Leader to put an item on the agenda of a Cabinet meeting. There is also the ability for a resolution to be made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or the full Council that an item be considered by the Cabinet, which could alter the forward Work Programme.
- 4.5 In addition to publishing the Cabinet work programme on the main Cabinet web page, the Work Programme is will also be published on a standalone 'Work Programme page' on the website to again assist Members of the public, by improving transparency.

#### **5. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

- 5.1 The work programme has been compiled by members of the Senior Leadership Team in discussion with the relevant portfolio holder(s) and has been consulted upon with the relevant scrutiny committees in respect of pre-scrutiny.

**6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

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

**7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Not applicable. Any implications to the Welsh language will be presented within each of the reports outlined within the work programme.

**8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

- 8.1 The work programme has been compiled by members of the Senior Leadership Team in discussion with the relevant portfolio holder(s) and has been consulted upon with the relevant scrutiny committees in respect of pre-scrutiny.

**9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

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

**10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 10.1 The report has been prepared in accordance with paragraph 12.1 (Part 4) of the Council's Constitution and the future requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

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

- 11.1 The Cabinet work programme encompasses all of the Council priorities as it indicates reports coming forward across the Directorates which may impact upon the Council's corporate priorities and others. It also embraces the Future Generations Acts as all future decisions taken by the Cabinet seek to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the County Borough.

**12. CONCLUSION**

- 12.1 An updated Cabinet work programme for the 2022-23 Municipal Year is attached.

**Other Information:-**

**Relevant Scrutiny Committee – Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

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

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**12<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2022**

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES &  
COMMUNICATION IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LEADER AND DEPUTY  
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL.**

**Item: CABINET WORK PROGRAMME: 2022-23 MUNICIPAL YEAR.**

### **Background Papers**

- Paragraph 12.1 (Part 4) of the Council's Constitution.



## Cabinet Work Programme

Forward plan of proposed Cabinet Business for the 2022/23 Municipal Year

Specific Period: June 2022 – May 2023

(Summary of proposed Key Decisions coming forward for Cabinet Members consideration)

*N.B – The work programme is subject to change to take account of any additional / deletion of reports, including any new consultative documents or legislative initiatives from the Welsh Government, which require urgent attention.*

Contact: Sarah Daniel (Tel No. 07385 086169)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Report</b>	<b>Officer</b>	<b>Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Open/ Exempt</b>	<b>Relevant Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>June 2022</b>	<b>Climate Change Strategy and its Commitments</b>	Chris Bradshaw, Chief Executive.	Cabinet Member Climate Change & Corporate Services	Open	Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Consultation Outcomes on Proposal to Create a New Community Primary School in Glyncoch</b>	Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services	Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language	Open	Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Consultation outcomes on the proposal to enhance Welsh Medium Learning Support Class provision for pupils with significant additional learning needs</b>	Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services	Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language	Open	Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Financial Update on school reorganisation in the Greater Pontypridd area (Band B)</b>	Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services	Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language	Open	Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee
	<b>MIM Update</b>	Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services	Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language	Exempt	Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Play Sufficiency Assessment</b>	Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care	Open	Community Services Scrutiny Committee

	<b>YEPS: Overview of Additional Funding</b>	Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language	Open	Community Services Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Community Wardens</b>	Roger Waters, Director Frontline Services	Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Investment	Open	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Cabinet Work Programme</b>	Christian Hanagan, Service Director Democratic Services and Communication	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Business	Open	
	<b>Armed Forces and War Memorials Commitment</b>	Christian Hanagan, Service Director Democratic Services and Communication	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Business	Open	
	<b>Leader's Scheme of Delegation and associated matters arising from the AGM</b>	Christian Hanagan, Service Director Democratic Services and Communication	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Business	Open	
	<b>The Pontypridd masterplan</b>	Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity and Development	Cabinet Member for Prosperity & Development	Open	Climate Change, Prosperity & Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Tree and Hedgerow Strategy</b>	Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity and Development	Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services	Open	Climate Change, Prosperity & Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee

	<b>Proposed LUF Submission for the Cynon Valley</b>	Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity and Development	Cabinet Member for Prosperity and Development	Open	Climate Change, Prosperity & Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee
<b>July 2022</b>	<b>Council's Performance &amp; Resources Report</b>  To provide Cabinet with an overview of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective	Barrie Davies, Director Finance and Digital Services	Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Housing Support Grant Needs Assessment and Strategy</b>	Louise Davies, Director Public Health, Protection & Community Services	Cabinet Member for Prosperity and Development	Open	Community Services Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Residential Care and Day Services Development - Bronllwyn</b>  This report will provide on development proposals for the former Care Home site as agreed by Cabinet back in December 2020	Paul Mee, Group Director – Community & Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care	Open	Community Services Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Residential Care Services</b>  To provide an update position on the current in-house provision, including some proposed short term changes to current provision in order to meet current demand and staffing pressures.	Paul Mee, Group Director – Community & Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care	Open	Community Services Scrutiny Committee



	<b>Childcare Sufficiency Assessment</b>	Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services	Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language	Open	Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Shared Prosperity Fund</b>	Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity and Development	Cabinet Member for Prosperity & Development	Open	Climate Change, Prosperity & Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Family Engagement Officers</b>	Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services	Cabinet Member Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language	Open	Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee
	<b>RCT SACRE Annual Report</b>  To receive the annual report of RCT SACRE	Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services	Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language	Open	Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee
<b>September 2022</b>	<b>Council's Performance Report</b>  To provide Cabinet with an overview of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective	Barrie Davies, Director of Finance and Digital Services	Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Corporate Services		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Cost of Living Support – Follow Up (Discretionary) Scheme</b>	Barrie Davies, Director of Finance and Digital Services	Leader of the Council		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Medium Term Financial Plan Update</b>	Barrie Davies, Director of Finance and Digital Services	Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Corporate Services		Overview and Scrutiny Committee

	<p><b>Update on the Implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act in RCT</b></p> <p>To update Members on the Access &amp; Inclusion Service's self-evaluation and future areas for further development.</p>	Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services	Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language		Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Cwm Taf Carer's Annual Report</b></p> <p>To approve for submission to WG the annual report.</p>	Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care		Community Services Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board Annual Report</b></p> <p>To receive the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Annual Report</p>	Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care		Community Services Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Cabinet Work Programme</b></p>	Christian Hanagan, Service Director Democratic Services and Communication	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Business		
	<p><b>Council Corporate Plan - Investment Priorities</b></p> <p>To consider the investment priorities</p>	Barrie Davies, Director of Finance and Digital Services	Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Corporate Services		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicle Transition Plan</b></p>	Roger Waters, Director Frontline Services	Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Investment		Overview and Scrutiny Committee

	<b>Update on a proposal for a new special school in RCT</b>	Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services	Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language	Open	Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Solar Panel Grant &amp; Domestic Heating Grant</b>	Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity and Development	Cabinet Member for Prosperity & Development		Climate Change, Prosperity and Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee
<b>October 2022</b>	<b>Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects – Supplementary Capital Programme</b>	Roger Waters, Director Frontline Services	Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Investment		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Budget Consultation Report</b>  To inform Members of the proposed approach to resident engagement and consultation in respect of the 2023/24 budget.	Christian Hanagan, Service Director Democratic Services and Communication	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Business		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Public Services Ombudsman for Wales - Annual Report and Letter 2021-2022</b>	Andrew Wilkins, Director of Legal Services	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Business		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Limited and Amgen Rhondda Limited – Annual General Meeting</b>  To provide Cabinet with details of the AGM in respect of the Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Ltd and Amgen Rhondda Ltd.	Andy Wilkins, Director of Legal Services	Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Investment	Exempt	
	<b>Council Tax Premiums – Long Term Empty Properties and Second Homes</b>	Barrie Davies, Director of Finance and Digital Services	Leader of the Council		Overview and Scrutiny Committee

	<p><b>Director Social Services Annual Report (Draft)</b></p> <p>To provide Cabinet with the annual report on the delivery, performance, risks, and planned improvements to the Social Services function of the Council</p>	Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care		Community Services Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Social Services Annual Complaints and Compliments Report</b></p> <p>To provide Cabinet with an overview of the operation &amp; effectiveness of the Council's Social Services complaints procedure</p>	Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care		Community Services Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for RCT</b></p> <p>To provide Cabinet with the proposed Leisure Strategy</p>	Louise Davies, Director Public Health, Protection and Community Services	Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure		Climate Change, Prosperity & Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Empty Homes Strategy 2022-2025</b></p> <p>To agree the Council's proposed approach to tackling empty homes which is set out in the Council's Empty Homes Strategy for the period 2022 -2025.</p>	Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity and Development	Cabinet Member for Prosperity & Development		Climate Change, Prosperity and Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Local Housing Market Assessment</b></p>	Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity and Development	Cabinet Member for Prosperity & Development		Climate Change, Prosperity & Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee

	<b>Community Infrastructure Levy Annual Report</b>	Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity and Development	Cabinet Member for Prosperity & Development		Climate Change, Prosperity & Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee
<b>November 2022</b>	<b>Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report</b>  To consider the Annual report of the Corporate Parenting Board	Christian Hanagan, Service Director Democratic Services and Communication Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care		Community Services Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Council Tax Base 2022/23</b>  To receive the report in respect of setting the Council Tax Base 2022/23	Barrie Davies, Director of Finance and Digital Services	Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure & Investment		
	<b>Council's Performance Report</b>  To provide Cabinet with an overview of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective	Barrie Davies, Director of Finance and Digital Services	Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Corporate Services		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Extra Care Developments</b>  The new Extra Care developments, and a proposal to build new large care homes across the 3 former districts, which offer a mix of care from residential through to high end nursing care, so that residents as they age, do not have to move between care homes	Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care		Community Services Scrutiny Committee

	<p><b>Corporate Asset Management Plan Interim Update</b></p> <p>To provide Cabinet with a progress update in respect of the plan.</p>	David Powell, Director of Corporate Estates	Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Corporate Services	Exempt	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
November 2022 - Service Change Cabinet	<p><b>Service Review of the Community Meals Service</b></p> <p>To assess the Council's Community Meals Service and to consult on the future of the service.</p>	Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services	Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language		
	<p><b>Commencement of the Authority's Review of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan</b></p> <p>To review and produce a revised Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan.</p>	Roger Waters, Director of Frontline Services	Leader		
	<p><b>Waste Services – Revised Waste Management Strategy</b></p> <p>To outline proposals for revisions to the Council's operational waste management processes and to initiate a consultation exercise in respect of the options for change as presented in the report.</p>	Roger Waters, Director of Frontline Services	Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure		
December 2022	<p><b>Residential Care</b></p>	Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care		Community Services Scrutiny Committee

	<b>Council tax premiums – Long term empty properties and second homes</b>	Barrie Davies, Director of Finance and Digital Services  Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity and Regeneration  Louise Davies, Director Public Health, Protection & Community Services	Cabinet Members for Climate Change and Corporate Services, Public Health & Communities, and Development and Prosperity		
	<b>Irrecoverable Debts</b>  To provide Cabinet with an update in respect of irrecoverable debts	Barrie Davies, Director of Finance and Digital Services	Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Corporate Services	Exempt	
	<b>Refugee Resettlement and Dispersal Programmes in RCT</b>	Louise Davies, Director Public Health, Protection & Community Services	Cabinet Member for Prosperity and Development	Open	Community Services Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Cabinet Work Programme</b>	Christian Hanagan, Service Director Democratic Services and Communication	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Business		
	<b>SLT Change Report</b>	Chief Executive	Leader	Exempt	

<b>January 2023</b>	<b>Update on North West Cardiff – RCT Transport Corridor Study</b>	Roger Waters, Director Frontline Services	Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Investment		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Human Resources Strategy</b>	Richard Evans, Director of Human Resources	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Business		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Update on Aberdare – Hirwaun Passenger Rail Services Study</b>	Roger Waters, Director Frontline Services	Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Investment		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Waste Services Consultation Feedback</b>	Roger Waters, Director of Frontline Services	Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure		
	<b>Community Infrastructure Levy “CIL” Consultation Responses</b>  To update Cabinet on the responses resulting from the Community Infrastructure Levy “CIL” consultation in respect of the Council’s Regulation 123 List	Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity and Development	Cabinet Member for Prosperity & Development		
	<b>Draft Town Centre Strategy for Aberdare</b>  To receive the draft Town Centre Strategy and initial delivery plan outlining funding sources such as the Levelling Up Fund	Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity and Development	Cabinet Member for Prosperity & Development		Climate Change, Prosperity and Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Budget Report</b>	Barrie Davies, Director of Finance and Digital Services	Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Investment		Overview and Scrutiny Committee



	<p><b>Council Fees and Charges</b></p> <p>The need to advise Cabinet of the proposed Council Fees and Charges for the financial year 2023/24</p>	Barrie Davies, Director of Finance and Digital Services	Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Investment		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Capital Programme</b></p> <p>To propose to Council the three year capital programme</p>	Barrie Davies, Director of Finance and Digital Services	Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Investment		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Digital Strategy</b></p> <p>To receive an update in respect of the Council's digital strategy</p>	Barrie Davies, Director of Finance and Digital Services	Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Corporate Services		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Sustainable Communities for Learning (Formerly 21st Century Schools): Proposal Relating to Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda</b></p>	Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services	Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language		Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Proposal to improve the Education provision for a new special school in RCT</b></p> <p>To seek Cabinet approval to begin the relevant and required statutory consultation for a new special school provision for RCT</p>	Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services	Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language		Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Community Meals Consultation Feedback</b></p>	Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services	Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language		Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Acquisition And Disposal Proposal</b></p>	David Powell, Director of Corporate Estates	Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Corporate Services	Exempt	

	<b>Office Accommodation</b>	Chief Executive David Powell, Director of Corporate Estates	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Business		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Hydro Schemes Update</b>	David Powell, Director of Corporate Estates	Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Corporate Services		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>National Adoption Annual Report</b>  To receive the National Adoption Annual Report	Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care		Community Services Scrutiny Committee
<b>February 2023</b>	<b>RIPA Annual Report</b>	Andrew Wilkins, Director of Legal Services	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Business		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Easy Read Constitution</b>	Christian Hanagan, Service Director Democratic Services and Communication	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Business		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Participation Strategy</b>	Christian Hanagan Service Director Democratic Services and Communication	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Business		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Regional Adoption Annual Report</b>  To consider the Regional Adoption Annual Report	Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care		Community Services Scrutiny Committee

	<b>Eisteddfod Update</b> To receive an update in respect of the Eisteddfod.	Louise Davies, Director Public Health, Protection and Community Services	Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language		Community Services Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Annual Equalities Report</b> To receive the report of the Director, Human Resources in respect of the Annual Equalities Report.	Richard Evans, Director of Human Resources	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Business		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Council's Performance &amp; Resources Report</b> To provide Cabinet with an overview of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective	Barrie Davies, Director of Finance and Digital Services	Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Investment		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects – Supplementary Capital Programme</b>	Roger Waters, Director Frontline Services	Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Investment		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Coal Tips</b>	Roger Waters, Director Frontline Services	Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Investment		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>March 2023</b>	<b>Cabinet Work Programme</b>	Christian Hanagan, Service Director Democratic Services and Communication	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Business		

## Ongoing Updates

Date	Report	Officer	Cabinet Member	Open/ Exempt	Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Ongoing Updates	<p><b>Processing Of Mixed Kerbside Recycling</b></p> <p>To provide Members with an update in respect of the opportunities of investment into processing of Mixed Kerbside Recycling</p>	Roger Waters, Director Frontline Services	Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Investment		Climate Change, Prosperity and Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Highways Investment Scheme</b></p> <p>To receive regular updates in respect of the Highways Investment Scheme</p>	Roger Waters, Director Frontline Services	Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Investment		Climate Change, Prosperity and Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee

	<p><b>Review of Mainstream School Transport Provision</b></p> <p>To provide Cabinet with the outcomes of the periodic review of the Council's mainstream School Transport Provision</p>	Roger Waters, Director Frontline Services	Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure		Climate Change, Prosperity and Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Porth Town Centre Strategy</b></p> <p>To receive updates as and when applicable</p>	Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity and Development	Cabinet Member for Prosperity and Development		Climate Change, Prosperity and Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Taff Vale Update and Business Plan</b></p> <p>To receive the Taff Vale Update Report</p>	Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity and Development	Cabinet Member for Prosperity and Development		Climate Change, Prosperity and Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Modernisation of Residential Care and Day Care for Older People – Consultation feedback</b></p> <p>To receive the consultation feedback</p>	Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care		Community Services Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>SS&amp;WB Board Development</b></p> <p>To consider any updates as appropriate in respect of the SS&amp;WB Board</p>	Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care		Community Services Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Regional Transformation Agenda</b></p> <p>To receive an update on the regional transformation agenda</p>	Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care		Community Services Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Development of Community Hubs</b></p>	Paul Mee, Group Director Community	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care		Community Services Scrutiny Committee

	To consider the development of Community Hubs across the County Borough	and Children's Services			
	<b>Extra Care Strategy</b> To receive update reports on the Councils progress in respect of delivery of the Extra Care Strategy	Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care		Community Services Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Advocacy</b> To provide Cabinet with an update in respect of advocacy	Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care		Community Services Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Cwm Taf MASH Annual Report</b> To receive the Annual report of the Cwm Taf MASH	Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care		Community Services Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Social Services &amp; Wellbeing Act</b> To provide updates as and when necessary on the Council's duties in respect of the Act	Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care		Community Services Scrutiny Committee
	<b>Local Air Quality Management Reports</b> To provide details of the Local Air Quality Management Reports	Paul Mee, Group Director Community and Children's Services	Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities		Community Services Scrutiny Committee
	<b>21<sup>st</sup> Century School Transformation Programme</b>	Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services	Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language		Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee

	<p><b>Cardiff Capital Region - City Deal</b></p> <p>The need to advise of the progress being made in respect of the City Deal</p>	Chief Executive	Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Investment		Overview and Scrutiny Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Staff Panel Report</b></p> <p>To receive details of the proposals put forward by the Council's Staff Panel in respect of efficiency savings and smarter ways of working</p>	Richard Evans, Director of Human Resources	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Business		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	<p><b>Scrutiny Recommendations</b></p> <p>To receive recommendations coming forward following a scrutiny review.</p>	Service Director Democratic Services and Communications			

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## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CABINET

12th DECEMBER 2022

### COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS – LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES AND SECOND HOMES

**JOINT REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES,  
DIRECTOR OF PROSPERITY AND REGENERATION AND DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC  
HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH COUNCILLOR  
C LEYSHON, COUNCILLOR B HARRIS AND COUNCILLOR M NORRIS**

**Author: Mr. B Davies, Director of Finance and Digital Services  
Tel: (01443) 424026**

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

- 1.1 This report provides Cabinet with the results of the public consultation which it agreed to initiate in respect of the introduction of a Council Tax Premium on long term empty properties and second homes in the County Borough.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Review and consider the consultation feedback as attached at Appendix 1 of this report;
- 2.2 Determine whether, and if so how, they wish to proceed with the proposed introduction of a premium in light of the consultation feedback;
- 2.3 Subject to the above, recommend the proposed way forward to Full Council; and
- 2.4 Authorise the Director of Finance and Digital Services to put in place the necessary implementation arrangements.

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

- 3.1 To provide Cabinet with the feedback from the public consultation in order to determine whether and if so how they wish to proceed with the proposed introduction of a Council Tax Premium on long term empty properties and second homes.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017, Councils in Wales have been able to charge higher amounts (a premium) of up to 100% on top of the standard rate of council tax on second homes and long-term empty properties. The legislative changes were made by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and the powers given to Councils are discretionary. Whether to charge a premium on second homes or long term empty properties (or both) is, therefore a decision to be made by each Council.
- 4.2 The Act also provides regulations which make exceptions to the premiums and these are set out in the Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) Regulations 2015.
- 4.3 From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, the regulations will be updated, following a Welsh Government consultation exercise, to allow Councils to charge a maximum premium of 300% on top of the standard rate of council tax.
- 4.4 Cabinet on the 17<sup>th</sup> October, considered and agreed a new Empty Homes Strategy for 2022-2025. One of the objectives of the strategy is to use a range of interventions to ensure all types of empty homes are targeted and enabled to be brought back into use. This includes reviewing Council Tax Premiums for long term empty homes and second homes.
- 4.5 At the same meeting, Cabinet agreed to undertake a consultation on the proposal to introduce a Council Tax Premium on Long Term Empty Properties as follows :

<b>Length of Time Property has been Empty</b>	<b>No of Properties</b>	<b>Current Council Tax Liability</b>	<b>Proposed Council Tax Liability</b>
Empty Properties Exempt from Paying Council Tax (6 Month Statutory Exemption)			
<b>0 – 6 Months</b>	1,095	Nil	Nil
Empty Properties already Subject to a Council Tax Charge			
<b>7 – 12 Months</b>	248	100%	100%
Empty Properties already Subject to a Council Tax Charge and proposed to be Charged a Premium			
<b>1 – 2 Years</b>	406	100%	150%
<b>2 Years +</b>	1,310	100%	200%

- 4.6 It was also proposed to charge a premium in respect of second homes and that this should be 100% for all properties classified as a second home under Class B of the

Council Tax (Prescribed Class of Dwelling) (Wales) Regulations 1998.

- 4.7 It was proposed that the premium for long term empty properties would be introduced and effective from **1<sup>st</sup> April 2023**, while the premium for second homes would be effective from **1<sup>st</sup> April 2024** (in line with the requirements of the Act).
- 4.8 The Council would write to each homeowner, once a decision is made, to advise them of the forthcoming changes, thereby providing as much advance notice as possible.
- 4.9 The full report which was considered by Cabinet on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2022 is attached at Appendix 2.

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

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed in respect of the proposal and concluded that there are no issues which would prevent the Cabinet from implementing the proposal.

## **6. CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 This report provides Cabinet with information on the response to the consultation exercise that has now taken place in relation to this proposal. The full consultation report is attached at Appendix 1.

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

- 7.1 The charging of a premium on long-term empty dwellings would raise additional revenue through the council tax. This is estimated (initially) at £1.5M (full year impact), but will be subject to review and confirmation pending the identification and application of the exceptions set out in Table 1.
- 7.2 The charging of a premium on second homes would raise an estimated extra £0.4M council tax (full year impact).

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The legal framework for the implementation of premiums are referenced throughout this report and are summarised below:
- Housing (Wales) Act 2014
  - Local Government Finance Act 1992, Sections 12A and 12B;

- Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) Regulations 2015

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

- 9.1 The charging of Higher Amounts supports the Council's work in delivering its Empty Homes Strategy and in doing so contributes to the delivery of Corporate Plan priorities and well-being goals as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

## 10. **CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 The Council has discretionary powers to charge higher amounts (premiums) in relation to council tax for long-term empty dwellings and second homes with a view to bringing empty properties back into use, increasing the supply of affordable housing and enhancing the sustainability of local communities.
- 10.2 This report summarises the responses to the consultation exercise that took place between 24<sup>th</sup> October and 21<sup>st</sup> November 2022 and should be considered in determining whether to implement the proposals set out at section 4 of this report.

# EMPTY PROPERTIES & SECOND HOMES CONSULTATION

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report presents the findings of the Empty Properties and Second Home consultation with regard to the proposed introduction of a Council Tax Premium.
- The consultation was conducted in-house. The consultation period ran from the 24<sup>th</sup> October and ended on the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2022.
- Views were sought on proposals to;
  - Introduce a Council Tax Premium on long-term empty properties at 50% for those which have been empty between 1 and 2 years. The level of premium would then increase to 100% for those properties which have been empty for more than 2 years.
  - To charge a 100% premium in respect of all second homes, as classified under Class B of the Council Tax (Prescribed Class of Dwelling) (Wales) Regulations 1998.
- The following methods were used to consult with stakeholders;
  - A letter was sent to all empty property and second home owners (2699)
  - An online questionnaire
  - Promotion online on the Council's website/social media
  - A telephone number for the Council's Contact Centre
  - A dedicated email address
- Overall, 311 responses were received to the consultation.
- Respondents provided their comments on the proposals via the survey and through letters and emails, the majority of comments were from owners of empty properties and second homes and in disagreement with the proposals.
- The most frequent concern expressed was that a blanket policy of higher rates will unfairly impact people with individual circumstances beyond their control. Circumstances described included; increased costs of renovation work, or a struggle to source supplies and/ or labour; collapsed sales or longer than expected time spent on the sales or letting markets; inherited property; being unable to meet the costs of selling or letting a property; having ties to the local area but being unable to live here at present and a number of other situations.
- A number of respondents have let/ currently let/ intend to let properties but state that they are unable to afford or complete necessary works to bring properties up to legislative standards. Causes including damage by former tenants, unexpected redundancy or ill-health and a perceived excessive legislative burden are cited.

- When the proposals are analysed in the survey by the type of respondent, the majority of residents agreed with the 2 proposals (65.3% / 60%).

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This report presents the findings of the Empty Properties and Second Home Council Tax Premium consultation.

1.2 Section 2 outlines some brief background to the consultation process.

1.3 Section 3 details the methodology.

1.4 Section 4 provides the results of the online questionnaire.

1.5 Section 5 presents the feedback received from letters and emails.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 The Council has discretionary powers to charge higher amounts of Council Tax (a premium) on certain properties provided for by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

2.2 The discretion given to Councils to charge a premium is intended to be used as part of a wider strategy to help Councils to:

- a) Bring long-term empty homes back into use to provide safe, secure and affordable homes; and
- b) Support Councils in increasing the supply of affordable housing and enhancing the sustainability of local communities.

2.3 This report provides the results of the consultation on the Council's proposals to:

- Introduce a Council Tax Premium on long-term empty properties at 50% for those which have been empty between 1 and 2 years. The level of premium would then increase to 100% for those properties which have been empty for more than 2 years.
- To charge a premium in respect of second homes, 100% for all properties classified as a second home under Class B of the Council Tax (Prescribed Class of Dwelling) (Wales) Regulations 1998.



### **3. METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 The Empty Properties and Second Home consultation was conducted in-house and ran from the 24<sup>th</sup> October to the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2022. This section presents the methodology which was utilised to promote and collect the data.
- 3.2 The consultation involved an online survey which was built using Snap XMP. The survey aimed to gain public feedback on the Council Tax premium proposals. A printed format of the survey was also provided for those who needed it.
- 3.3 To ensure wider outreach and involvement of the community the consultation was promoted on the [Councils online consultation webpage](#) to encourage engagement. An email was also sent to key stakeholders to promote the consultation and encourage participation on the Snap XMP survey.
- 3.4 As part of engagement, a letter was sent to 2699 empty property and second home owners within RCT to gather their views on the proposals.
- 3.5 Respondents were encouraged to respond through a dedicated email address [consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk), in order to allow them to share their views, concerns, and share their personal circumstances in regard to the proposals introduced in the consultation. Overall, there were a total of 69 emails/letters received from the public relating to the consultation.
- 3.6 A telephone consultation option is in place for all Council consultations, through the Council's contact centre. This option allows people to discuss their views or request consultation materials. Individual call backs were available on request and a consultation Freepost address was available for postal responses.
- 3.7 Overall, 311 responses were received to the consultation.

## 4 Questionnaire Results

- 4.1 The following section outlines the results from the questionnaire, which received 242 responses. A selection of comments are provided and the full list of the comments will be provided to Cabinet and senior officers to assist with decision making.
- 4.2 Respondents were asked whether they were responding as the owner of an empty property in RCT, the owner of a second home in RCT, a resident or 'other'.

**Table 1: Respondents**

<b>Analysis % Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Are you replying to the questionnaire as;</b>	
<b>The owner of an Empty Property in Rhondda Cynon Taf?</b>	<b>28.1%</b>
<b>The owner of a second home in Rhondda Cynon Taf?</b>	<b>14.6%</b>
<b>A resident of RCT</b>	<b>49.0%</b>
<b>Other (please state)</b>	<b>8.3%</b>

- 4.3 Respondents were asked whether they agreed with the following 2 proposals:

**Table 2: Agreement with proposals**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
<b>Proposals</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Proposal 1</b> - It is proposed that a Council Tax Premium is introduced on long-term empty properties at 50% for those which have been empty between 1 and 2 years. The level of premium would then increase to 100% for those properties which have been empty for more than 2 years.	42.5	50.0	7.5

<p><b>Proposal 2</b> - It is also proposed to charge a premium in respect of second homes and that this should be 100% for all properties classified as a second home under Class B of the Council Tax (Prescribed Class of Dwelling) (Wales) Regulations 1998.</p>	<p>38.8</p>	<p>53.2</p>	<p>8.0</p>
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**Comments Proposal 1 – Empty Properties**

4.4 After viewing the comments received on the first proposal, the following are a selection of the comments received;

**Agreement with the Proposal**

*“Brilliant idea”*

*“Hopefully it would become a deterrent for those that own empty properties to do something positive with them.”*

*“I agree with this proposal. Hopefully the homeowner will sell or rent out the empty property so that another person/family can have the benefit of the same.”*

*“Affordable housing is very important to me. I earn good money and am old enough to have spent time renting in house shares in cities, younger residents will not be able to afford the privilege of owning or even renting by themselves or in a house share when our property is being selfishly hoarded by wealthy people.”*

*“Houses are for living in, not just for market speculation”*

*“Homes need to be kept to a decent standard and lived in. Increasing council tax on derelict and empty properties will encourage this but won't necessarily solve the problem.”*

*“Empty properties need to be done up and sold. There's plenty of people looking for places to live”*

**Disagreement with the Proposal**

*“some properties are empty for longer as due to the current financial market owners cannot afford to renovate, charging extra would mean*

*even less cash to renovate and these properties are not using council services”*

*“The properties have no cost to the council and additional taxation in one of the highest council tax areas in the country is wrong.”*

*“This would disincentivise builders to take on properties that have been empty and bring them up to a modern acceptable standard.”*

*“I agree with addressing long term empty properties, however if an owner of a rental property can evidence it being advertised, and/or undergoing extensive renovation, then they should not be penalised. In cases of extensive renovation, a complete waiver to council tax should be granted (time bound).”*

*“I understand that there are long term empty properties in RCT but this new rule will unfairly penalise the private rental sector at a time when so many other factors are weighing on landlords. There is not enough social housing in RCT so there is a reliance on private landlords who are already being squeezed.”*

*“You should be incentivising property developers - not penalising them. When the property is empty no council services are being used so no Council Tax should be payable.”*

*“I am currently undertaking a long-term project to update/renovate my property, with the view of eventually providing reasonable quality, affordable accommodation, which will hopefully provide long term secure accommodation for a local family/individual. I am currently undertaking work when time and finances allow, should my council tax increase this will dramatically slow or even put a stop on my ability to complete this work.”*

*“Renovations under way. We are having difficulties with the cost of materials and getting builders. Been hampered by ill health mortgage costs and fuel prices. If you're current proposals are implemented, we will have to sell”*

### **Comments Proposal 2 – Second Homeowners**

- 4.5 After viewing the comments received on the second proposal, the following are a selection of the comments received;

#### **Agreement with the proposal**

*“Once again fully support, great idea”*

*"I agree that those with second homes should be charged premium tax rates, but there should be something in place to prevent landlords from exploiting tenants with high rental charges to cover this cost"*

*"If you can afford the second home then you can afford to pay the associated fees, etc."*

*"Yes, it's ridiculous how many 2nd homes & air B&B are in the valleys. This is putting prices up for local people. You want to encourage people stay and live in the Valleys you must provide the properties for them to purchase."*

*"Accommodation is desperately needed, and people cannot afford to buy, hence more renting."*

*"A second home is a privilege of a wealthy minority at a time of housing shortage. It should be paid for"*

### **Disagreement with the Proposal**

*"This is a very poor way to force people with second homes to sell them. Additional housing is the responsibility of the council, and this is an attempt to remove the responsibility to private house holders."*

*"Once again the property is the individuals to which they have worked long and hard for I do not agree that the council has the right to look into an individual's dwelling"*

*"This proposal is pure greed. The premium if applied, should be based on the owner's ability to pay and not exceed 15%."*

*"Another money-making scheme. People should not be penalised for working hard to be able to have a second home or if unfortunate enough to have lost family members and inherited the homes."*

*"You are penalising people who have made provision for them selves and I intend writing to UK government as your proposals will mean that nobody will buy property to rent anymore"*

*"I was born & raised in the area where I have my second property & intend to retire there. If this additional charge is applied, I will not be able to afford to do this. My family & friends all live in this area & I would be devastated to sell my home."*

*"I claim benefits and would be financially unable to make payment"*

- 4.6 When the proposals above are analysed by the type of respondent we can see that the majority of residents are more likely to agree with these proposals (65.3% / 60%) than empty property (8.5% / 15.5%) or second homeowners (27% / 2.7%);

**Table 3: Agreement with proposals by type of Respondent**

<b>Analysis %</b>				
<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Empty property Owner % Agreed</b>	<b>Second home owner % Agreed</b>	<b>Resident % Agreed</b>	<b>Other agreed (%)</b>
<b>Proposal 1</b> - It is proposed that a Council Tax Premium is introduced on long-term empty properties at 50% for those which have been empty between 1 and 2 years. The level of premium would then increase to 100% for those properties which have been empty for more than 2 years.	8.5	27.0	65.3	33.3
<b>Proposal 2</b> - It is also proposed to charge a premium in respect of second homes and that this should be 100% for all properties classified as a second home under Class B of the Council Tax (Prescribed Class of Dwelling) (Wales) Regulations 1998.	15.5	2.7	60.0	38.1

### **Timescales of proposals**

- 4.7 The Council is proposing that the premium for long term empty properties is introduced and effective from 1st April 2023, while the premium for second homes would be effective from 1st April 2024 (in line with the requirements of the Act).
- 4.8 The majority of residents who took part agreed with this part of the proposal (65.3%), with only 21.1% of empty property owners agreeing and 25% of second homeowners.

**Table 4: Timescale for proposals**

	Total	Timescales		
		Yes	No	Don't Know
	<b>236</b>	<b>45.3%</b>	<b>42.4%</b>	<b>12.3%</b>
<b>Are you replying to the questionnaire as;</b>				
<b>The owner of an Empty Property in Rhondda Cynon Taf?</b>		<b>21.1%</b>	<b>66.2%</b>	<b>12.7%</b>
<b>The owner of a second home in Rhondda Cynon Taf?</b>		<b>25.0</b>	<b>63.9%</b>	<b>11.1%</b>
<b>a resident of RCT</b>		<b>65.3%</b>	<b>24.8%</b>	<b>9.9%</b>

**Extra Revenue Received**

- 4.9 The Council is proposing that the extra revenue raised would support the continuation of the Council's Empty Homes Strategy, and therefore be in line with the stated policy intentions of Welsh Government.

	Total	Extra revenue		
		Yes	No	Don't Know
<b>Base</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>38.5%</b>	<b>53.1%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>
<b>Are you replying to the questionnaire as;</b>				
<b>The owner of an Empty Property in Rhondda Cynon Taf?</b>		<b>9.9%</b>	<b>88.7%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>
<b>The owner of a second home in Rhondda Cynon Taf?</b>		<b>19.4%</b>	<b>75.0%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>
<b>A resident of RCT</b>		<b>61.3%</b>	<b>32.3%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>

- 4.10 The majority of residents agreed with the approach for the extra revenue (61.3%), with the majority of the empty home respondents (88.7%) and second homeowners disagreeing (75.0%).

- 4.11 The following are a selection of “other” comments received in the survey, under a number of main themes;

### **Comments**

#### **Agreement with the Proposals**

*“Anything that can reduce the waiting time for people to find somewhere to live would be so beneficial to many communities”*

*“Some owners let things drift with their properties. These proposals will make decisions to be made.....”*

*“No one should be able to make a profit from property while there are many people struggling to afford rent or mortgages. Property should not be an attractive investment for anybody, the Rhondda could set an example to the country with stricter rules on property letting and owning more than one residential property”*

*“The basic principle of spending money from long term empty properties to support the strategy we agree with. In our situation, I believe we have brought our house back into use and if work situation changes, we would move back in tomorrow.”*

*“What is the reason for this delay? This is an opportunity to collect additional money at a time when there is great pressure on the public purse. Move faster.”*

#### **Disagreement with the Proposals**

*“As stated earlier this would disincentivise builders or developers taking on properties that have been unoccupied for long periods”*

*“All that will happen is lots of properties become empty and up for sale as the owners of second homes do not want to pay thousands in council tax more than they should need to. It will not put more houses into use by anyone requiring a home!”*

*“no I do not agree as you are making money off the back of people where you are forcing them and giving them no other option than to sell their homes at reduced prices. You have builders waiting for these homes to buy at a cheaper price who then make a good profit on them once renovated and sold on. If they choose to rent them the rental price is usually a lot higher than what housing association would charge, so how is this providing affordable homes when young people or first time buyers, or renters cannot afford the price they are asking. as for renting them, if you are lucky enough”*



## Timescales

- 4.12 Some of the respondents felt that the timescales suggested in the proposal were unfair, as they were perceived to not provide the owners with enough time to rent, sell or improve the condition of empty properties to a decent standard.

*“Although I agree in general with charging extra on empty homes to encourage owners to bring them in to use, I think the timeline of April 2023 is actually too soon. I believe if you delay it by a year you will give owners adequate time to do something with the property. Be that sell it as is or renovate and sell/let the property. 5 months from today to do any of those with the current economic conditions is a tall ask and could be seen as profiteering more than helping.”*

*“Not long enough for empty properties which are to be sold. Builders will just stop renovating and renting as it will not be cost effective to pay the 200%”*

## Costs

- 4.13 A number of respondents felt that the proposals could lead them into financial difficulties;

*“If council tax and other relevant outgoings are paid on the property what other issues remain. The extra expenditure for me would be crippling adding to a very difficult situation already.”*

*“again, financially people cannot afford to renovate and would not leave properties empty when they could be charging rent...”*

*“Currently, I do not qualify for any of the grants/loans provided by RCT under the empty homes scheme. I would therefore be paying extra tax to help pay for other people’s properties and renovations while I struggle to pay for my own due to increased outgoings due to premium council tax.”*

## Individual Circumstances

- 4.14 A number of responses felt that the council needed to take into account the individuals own circumstances, rather than taking a blanket approach, this included ill health, family situations and inheriting houses;

*I agree with it in principal. If a person has more than one home and one stands empty, then yes, but not if it is the main home and it is empty for another reason (health/unliveable conditions etc)*

*I do not think you can take a blanket approach to this issue.*

*I think there should be a differential made between empty homes and those that are undergoing renovation, with a delay in implementation as peoples planned budgets to undertake works have been completely blown out of the water for reasons stated above (lack of supplies, tradesmen and excessively greedy tradesmen.*

*It should be on an individual basis and means tested*

*I've looked at the empty home scheme and don't feel it's suitable for everyone , therefore I'd be paying an extra premium to renovate other peoples homes*

### **Help/Support**

- 4.15 Some of the respondents suggested that the Council could provide more support to bring empty properties up to an appropriate standard.

*"..... the Council should be looking at ways of incentivising owners of empty homes to bring them back into use by offering grants for certain improvements to be made rather than taking punitive measures through increased taxes for services which are not being used by the owners of said properties"*

*"You need to work closer with landlords and property owners, providing help and support to bring properties up to an acceptable standard for occupation. your punitive strategy will simply force more landlords to give up and without the private sector the council will have to provide more homes."*

*"I understand that the local authority is financially in a very difficult position and are looking to make cuts and increase revenue wherever possible. However maybe providing more support to get empty properties back into the rental arena would be a more practical/positive step, rather than penalising people who already in a challenging position...."*

*"Would it not be better for the council to make it more appealing for people to do up houses that they buy to either rent or sell to the council, this way there would be more housing stock on the market"*

## 5 Letter and Email Responses

- 5.1 The following section outlines a summary of the comments from letters and emails received in response to the consultation. Letters were sent out to over 2,699 owners of empty properties in Rhondda Cynon Taf. 1 letter and 68 emails were received in response to the consultation.
- 5.2 The most frequent concern, expressed in the majority of emails and letter, is that a blanket policy of higher rates will unfairly impact people with individual circumstances beyond their control. Each letter or email detailed the circumstances that the writer felt should exempt them from the Council Tax premium.
- 5.3 Circumstances described included; increased costs of renovation work, or a struggle to source supplies and/ or labour; collapsed sales or longer than expected time spent on the sales or letting markets; inherited property; being unable to meet the costs of selling or letting a property; having ties to the local area but being unable to live here at present (including holding property on behalf of a younger relative); and a number of other situations.
- 5.4 A number of respondents have let/ currently let/ intend to let properties but state that they are unable to afford or complete necessary works to bring properties up to legislative standards. Causes including damage by former tenants, unexpected redundancy or ill-health and a perceived excessive legislative burden are cited. A number of these respondents requested information about grants or other financial assistance to complete required renovations.
- 5.5 Multiple respondents stated that they feel it is unreasonable to be charged any/ higher Council Tax on properties that are empty, as these properties make no demands on the services that they perceive Council Tax to be paid for e.g., waste collection, road maintenance and so on.
- 5.6 The following table shows the frequency of comments made.

**Table 10: Count of themes / categories emerging from comments**

<b>The themes / categories that emerged from the comments are as follow:</b>	<b>Count</b>
<b>Individual circumstances:</b> a blanket approach will unfairly penalise people with circumstances beyond their control including e.g. unable to sell/ collapsed sales, ill-health, delays to renovations etc.	27
<b>Renovations:</b> problems with building supplies/ labour, work unable to be completed	8
<b>Financial security:</b> owners who are pensioners/ on reduced income unable to meet costs/ forced sales would threaten future finances	7

<b>Costs:</b> Not in a financial position to be able to afford this proposal/ already struggling to afford the bills. Costs of renovation high before sales	11
<b>Renting:</b> Problems with tenants and damage to property	4
<b>Sales Market:</b> not enough local sales demand, delays selling	6
<b>Services:</b> Unfair to pay Council tax on an empty property when services aren't being received / no amenities benefits	6
More information on grants requested (particularly help with renovations to rental properties)	6

5.7 The following are a selection of comments from the main themes;

**Note: Service Managers and Members will be provided with all emails to consider the full responses in detail.**

### Comments

#### **Individual Circumstances**

*"...such a policy of Premium Charging, if introduced must allow each situation to be examined individually not be applied automatically via the Council Tax charging process."*

*"...I think it would be better to first ask the owner of a property why his property is empty before you impose an extra charge."*

*"Individual circumstances need to be considered before forcing what I consider a punitive increase on already struggling citizens like myself."*

#### **Renovations**

*"I am a single person who is currently trying to renovate an empty property and really struggling with the current cost of living and the increasing cost of materials and trades people. I have been paying full council tax now for a number of months alongside trying to cover the costs of the renovation so with a premium on the council tax this will have to place the renovation on hold until I can save up enough money to continue so effectively leaving this property empty for a lot longer."*

*"In January 2020 I was made redundant from my full time whilst in the middle of carrying out an extensive renovation on my property. To compound matters, the covid pandemic then hit, which put stop to all work on my property for well over 12 months, whilst making it incredibly difficult for me to find work during a tumultuous period for society as a whole. Since recommencing work on my property, I've had to endure huge price increases to both materials and labour which have hugely affected my build schedule as I'm having to find money to cover unforeseeable budget increases which I'm struggling to cover."*

## **Financial Security & Costs**

*"I believe that pensioner owners of second properties should be exempt from the proposed 100% penalty charge. Some, including ourselves, have inherited properties and have bought adjoining terraced houses just to make life a bit easier for themselves."*

*"I am a pensioner and single occupant who is currently paying council tax on two properties. Your proposal would leave me with a council tax bill of over £450 and I am now paying over £200 month in utility bills. My state pension is less than £600, so for the first time in my life it is likely that I will have to default on my bills. The cost of living is spiralling and house prices now falling."*

*"...we are due for retirement and this is part of retirement plan as we have lost a lot of money off our pensions."*

## **Renting**

*"I had a tenant that stopped paying the rent who I had to remove from the property. Hence it is now empty and has been on the market for over a year."*

*"The former occupant – who did not leave my property undamaged, left at the time of the introduction of Covid restrictions. As a person on the Welsh Governments "shielding" list I was unable to visit the property and carry out the necessary repairs and refurbishing for over a year. It then took me over 6 months to complete the refurbishments. Shouldn't that time when it was not possible for someone to live in the property be discounted from any period of "long term empty property"?"*

*"My three houses were badly damaged by tenants and I do not have the necessary funding to repair / renovate them. I am now retired, not in good health and unable to borrow against the houses."*

## **Sales Market**

*"...the house was sold last August and I am still waiting for solicitors to finish their enquiries. It will cost me a further £5,000.00 just to sell the house when I add agent's fees, solicitors' fees, council tax, insurance, with the possibility that the sale could fall through and the process would have to be repeated."*

*"My own currently empty property was placed for sale with a local Estate Agent some months ago and is currently under offer – it is unlikely to be purchased by someone who needs to rent."*

*"We purchase a new build and were told it would be completed in March 2022. We therefore put our house on the market and moved into our downsized home believing we would sell within 6 months. Unfortunately, given the economic climate, our buyer pulled out in September 2022. We therefore*

*are in the situation now where we are being penalised due to the economic situation.”*

### **Grants/ information**

*“If you wish to have an Empty Homes strategy then maybe you should look at helping landlords through the provision of improvement grants or loans to assist works to be carried out.”*

*“I would love to have my property rented but the pandemic and now the financial crisis has made it virtually impossible to find either materials or building trade to do the work. Are there any grants/assistance which could enable me to get my property to a rentable standard ?“*

### **Services**

*“I have been paying 100% council tax each year at ~£1,700 per annum, which is in my opinion, for an empty property is already a fair contribution towards the services that the local council and police force provide, which, as far as I understand is the primary reason for paying council tax.”*

*“I always thought Council Tax was a payment for services that you the Council provide e.g., Refuge and Recycle Collection, Road Sweeping and for facilities such as libraries, parks, and sport centres. Considering all the things the Council provide the property is empty and therefore nobody there to use these facilities. We feel you are claiming this money under false pretences.”*

*“We are currently paying 100% Council Borough tax, even though we only use council facilities (roads, tip, rubbish collection etc) less than 25% of the year, not to mention the many facilities we never get to use. As it stands, having our second home in Wales means that we pay 25% of council tax for services that we may use, and 75% towards services that we never use. We are happy to pay that amount to support the local community. However, the 100% premium, if it comes into effect, will mean that we are paying 8 times the services we are actually using! This feels really unfair.”*

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## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CABINET

17<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2022

### COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS – LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES AND SECOND HOMES

**JOINT REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES,  
DIRECTOR OF PROSPERITY AND REGENERATION AND DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC  
HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH COUNCILLOR  
C LEYSHON, COUNCILLOR B HARRIS AND COUNCILLOR M NORRIS**

**Author: Mr. B Davies, Director of Finance and Digital Services  
Tel: (01443) 424026**

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

- 1.1 This report provides information concerning discretionary powers that the Council has to charge higher amounts of Council Tax (a premium) on certain properties provided for by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
- 1.2 Having regard to these powers, to consider a formal period of consultation on a proposal to introduce a premium.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the details of the discretionary powers relating to Council Tax Premiums as outlined in this report;
- 2.2 Agree to initiate a consultation exercise on the proposed use of these powers in respect of empty properties and second homes as set out in Section 10; and
- 2.3 Agree that a report, including the results of the consultation exercise, be presented to cabinet to consider and determine the proposed way forward which they would recommend to full Council.

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

- 3.1 The discretion given to Councils to charge a premium is intended to be used as part of a wider strategy to help Councils to:
  - a) Bring long-term empty homes back into use to provide safe, secure and affordable homes; and

b) Support Councils in increasing the supply of affordable housing and enhancing the sustainability of local communities.

3.2 The determination to charge a premium under these powers must be made by full Council. However, prior to doing so the Council must give due consideration to its statutory duties to carry out equality impact assessments under the Equality Act 2010 and the Welsh Public Sector Equality Duties 2011, as well as considering engagement and consultation with key stakeholders and the residents of the County Borough.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

4.1 From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017, Councils in Wales have been able to charge higher amounts (a premium) of up to 100% on top of the standard rate of council tax on second homes and long-term empty properties. The legislative changes were made by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and the powers given to Councils are discretionary. Whether to charge a premium on second homes or long term empty properties (or both) is, therefore a decision to be made by each Council.

4.2 The Act also provides regulations which make exceptions to the premiums and these are set out in the Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) Regulations 2015 and are detailed in part 5 of this report.

4.3 From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, the regulations will be updated, following a Welsh Government consultation exercise, to allow Councils to charge a maximum premium of 300% on top of the standard rate of council tax.

#### **5. HOUSING STRATEGY CONTEXT**

5.1 RCT's Empty Homes Strategy (2017-2022) was developed in recognition of the high numbers of empty homes in the County Borough, especially in the North, and the Council's commitment to addressing the problem. It was also in appreciation of the continuing pressure to deliver affordable housing for residents of RCT. Whilst most new housing supply will be delivered through new build developments, bringing empty homes back into use can offer an economically viable option, which can also contribute to increasing the affordable housing supply. At the same time, it will have a positive impact on existing communities by improving environmental and social conditions.

5.2 Since the strategy has been implemented the number of empty homes in RCT has reduced from 3,556 in April 2017 to 2,894 in April 2021, this a reduction of 662 (21%) homes. Whilst the reduction in the number of empty homes is positive, there are still a number of empty homes across RCT despite the Council's progress and commitment to bringing them back into use. To continue to address this issue a new Empty Homes Strategy is being developed and this proposal fully supports the new strategy.

5.3 A recent analysis of empty homes in RCT showed that 905 homes have been empty for the last 4 years. Whilst the Council continues to target these empty homes and provide advice and assistance to the home owners in order to support them to bring



them back into use, it is recognised that additional measures are required to encourage home owners not to leave these homes empty.

- 5.4 It is also important to note that the recent draft Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) 2022 – 2037 identified an annual need for 255 new affordable homes. It also identified that 6,208 new households will form during the period of the LHMA, of which 1,951 households will be unable to afford market housing costs. New build developments alone will not sufficiently meet this demand which further reinforces the need to bring existing housing stock across RCT back into use.
- 5.5 Since the introduction of the 100% Council Tax charge for empty properties, the Council has seen an increase in the number of requests for advice and assistance from both landlords and home owners, to bring their properties back into use evidencing the positive impact this has had on the number of empty homes across RCT.

## 6. **EXCEPTIONS TO THE COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS**

- 6.1 A premium cannot be charged on a dwelling that falls within one of the seven Classes of Dwellings listed in Table 1. The Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) Regulations 2015, sets out the following exceptions:

Table 1 – Classes of Exceptions to Higher Amounts

<b>Class</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Application</b>
Class 1	Dwellings being marketed for sale – time limited for one year.	Second Homes and Long-Term Empty Properties
Class 2	Dwellings being marketed for let – time limited for one year	
Class 3	Annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling	
Class 4	Dwellings which would be someone’s sole or main residence if they were not residing in armed forces accommodation	
Class 5	Occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings	Second Homes
Class 6	Seasonal homes where year-round occupation is prohibited	
Class 7	Job-related dwellings	

- 6.2 Welsh Government have provided guidance in relation to assisting Councils in the application of the exceptions.

## **7. HIGHER AMOUNTS (PREMIUMS) FOR LONG TERM EMPTY DWELLINGS**

- 7.1 For the purposes of charging a premium, a long-term empty dwelling is defined as a dwelling, which is both unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of at least **one year**.
- 7.2 In determining the length of time a dwelling has been empty, no account can be taken of any period before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016. In addition, the furnishing or occupation of a dwelling for one or more periods of six weeks or less during the year will not affect its status as a long-term empty dwelling. In other words, a person cannot alter a dwellings status as a long-term empty dwelling by taking up residence or installing furniture for a short period.
- 7.3 Where a Council makes a determination to charge a premium on long-term empty dwellings, it may specify different percentages (up to a maximum of 300 per cent from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023) for different dwellings based on the length of time for which they have been empty.
- 7.4 Should the Council determine to charge a premium on this type of property then notice of the decision must be published within 21 days of that decision but there is no requirement for the Council to provide a prescribed period of notice before charging a premium e.g. if Council determined in January/February 2023, after consulting, to charge a higher amount for this category of property then this could be effective from 1st April 2023.
- 7.5 Recent analysis of council tax data shows that around 40% properties classed as Long-Term Empty are owned by people who do not live in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

## **8. HIGHER AMOUNTS (PREMIUMS) FOR SECOND HOMES**

- 8.1 A second home is defined as a dwelling that is not a person's sole or main residence and is substantially furnished. These dwellings are referred to in the Local Government Finance Act (LGFA) 1992 as dwellings occupied periodically but they are commonly referred to as "second homes".
- 8.2 In order for a premium to apply to dwellings occupied periodically, a Council must make its first determination under section 12B of the LGFA 1992, at least one year before the beginning of the financial year to which the premium relates. This means that in order to charge a premium from 1st April 2024, a determination must be made before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.
- 8.3 Recent analysis of council tax data shows that approximately 40% of properties classed as second homes are owned by people who do not live in Rhondda Cynon Taf.



**9. CURRENT POLICY AND LEVELS OF LONG-TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES AND SECOND HOMES**

- 9.1 The level of discount for second homes (i.e. 0%) has been unchanged since 1<sup>st</sup> April 1996 when this Council was formed but until 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 a long term empty dwelling attracted a 50% council tax discount.
- 9.2 However, from 1st April 2018, owners of long-term empty dwellings have been required to pay a full council tax bill (i.e. no discount is allowed). Members took this decision as part of the Council's work in delivering its Empty Homes Strategy and the impact has been that the number of long-term empty dwellings has fallen by 22% since the discount was removed.
- 9.3 Latest data (August 2022) shows there are still around 2,000 long-term empty properties in the County Borough at any given time. Appendix 1 provides additional information in relation to the distribution of these properties across the communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf and the length of time that these properties have stood empty.
- 9.4 There are a smaller number of second homes in Rhondda Cynon Taf (346) but this number has increased by over 80% since April 2018 – Appendix 2 provides some additional information in regards to these.

**10. PROPOSAL TO CHARGE A COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM**

- 10.1 The Council remains committed to maximising the availability of good quality housing for our residents and on reducing the number of long standing empty properties, which have a negative impact on our communities.
- 10.2 It is proposed that in order to support this objective, a Council Tax Premium is introduced on long-term empty properties at 50% for those which have been empty for up to 2 years. The level of premium would then increase to 100% for those properties which have been empty for more than 2 years. This means that the amount of Council Tax which is payable on empty properties would be as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Proposed Council Tax Liability for Empty Properties

Length of Time Property has been Empty	No of Properties	Current Council Tax Liability	Proposed Council Tax Liability
Empty Properties Exempt from Paying Council Tax (6 Month Statutory Exemption)			
<b>0 – 6 Months</b>	1,095	Nil	Nil
Empty Properties already Subject to a Council Tax Charge			
<b>7 – 12 Months</b>	248	100%	100%
Empty Properties already Subject to a Council Tax Charge and proposed to be Charged a Premium			
<b>1 – 2 Years</b>	406	100%	150%
<b>2 Years +</b>	1,310	100%	200%

- 10.3 Note that in assessing the length of time a property has been empty, and as set out at para 7.2, no account can be taken of periods before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 – this does not have relevance insofar as this proposal is concerned.
- 10.4 It is also proposed to charge a premium in respect of second homes and that this should be 100% for all properties classified as a second home under Class B of the Council Tax (Prescribed Class of Dwelling) (Wales) Regulations 1998.
- 10.5 It is proposed that the premium for long term empty properties is introduced and effective from **1<sup>st</sup> April 2023**, while the premium for second homes would be effective from **1<sup>st</sup> April 2024** (in line with the requirements of the Act).
- 10.6 The Council would write to each homeowner, once a decision is made, to advise them of the forthcoming changes, thereby providing as much advance notice as possible.
- 10.7 The Council Tax legislation already has a number of statutory exemptions defined and clearly these will continue unaffected by the proposal set out above. A schedule of statutory exemptions is set out at Appendix 3 for completeness.

## **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 These will be considered as part of the consultation exercise.

## **12. CONSULTATION**

- 12.1 It is proposed that a 4 week consultation process be undertaken on this proposal. This will include the Council writing directly to the owner of every empty property to invite their feedback.
- 12.2 The council has previously (2019) consulted on a proposal to introduce a premium on long term empty properties, however this was never subsequently determined due to the onset of the pandemic.

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

- 13.1 The charging of a premium on long-term empty dwellings would raise additional revenue through the council tax. This is estimated (initially) at £1.5M (full year impact), but will be subject to review and confirmation pending the identification and application of the exceptions set out in Table 1. It is proposed that the extra revenue raised would support the continuation of the Council's Empty Homes Strategy, and therefore be in line with the stated policy intentions of Welsh Government.
- 13.2 The charging of a premium on second homes would raise an estimated extra £0.4M council tax (full year impact).

## **14. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 The legal framework for the implementation of premiums are referenced throughout this report and are summarised below:
- Housing (Wales) Act 2014
  - Local Government Finance Act 1992, Sections 12A and 12B;
  - Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) Regulations 2015

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

- 15.1 The charging of Higher Amounts supports the Council's work in delivering its Empty Homes Strategy and in doing so contributes to the delivery of Corporate Plan priorities and well-being goals as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

## **16. CONCLUSION**

- 16.1 The Council has discretionary powers to charge higher amounts (premiums) in relation to council tax for long-term empty dwellings and second homes with a view to bringing empty properties back into use, increasing the supply of affordable housing and enhancing the sustainability of local communities.

- 16.2 Despite the removal of a 50% discount in the council tax in April 2018, there remain almost 2,000 long-term empty properties across Rhondda Cynon Taf. The prospect of paying a premium on the council tax bill may encourage more property owners to bring their empty homes back into use in a timelier manner.
- 16.3 The number of properties classified as “second homes” is increasing within Rhondda Cynon Taf and while these are still relatively low, the properties are being kept vacant for long periods and in general terms precluded from the available housing stock. Therefore, it would be reasonable to consider whether a premium should be paid in addition to the council tax liability.
- 16.4 This report recommends that in relation to long-term empty properties and second homes, a consultation exercise is conducted to gauge the views of residents and property owners on the proposal as set out in this report.

**APPENDIX 1 – DISTRIBUTION OF LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES BY COMMUNITY AREA AND PROPERTY BAND**

<b>Community Area</b>	<b>7 - 12 Months</b>	<b>1 - 2 Years</b>	<b>2 years +</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
ABERAMAN	13	22	64	99
ABERCYNON	6	8	34	48
ABERDARE	26	23	91	140
CWM CLYDACH	8	13	39	60
CWMBACH	1	3	14	18
CYMMER	6	9	29	44
FERNDALE	11	10	51	72
GILFACH GOCH	2	6	9	17
HIRWAUN	2	8	25	35
LLANHARAN		7	19	26
LLANHARRY	4	5	9	18
LLANTRISANT	4	16	34	54
LLANTWIT FARDRE	4	8	30	42
LLWYDCOED			12	12
LLWYNYPIA	3	4	11	18
MAERDY	2	6	27	35
MOUNTAIN ASH	9	26	37	72
PENRHIWCEIBER	9	10	45	64
PENTRE	6	13	66	85
PENYGRAIG	9	12	28	49
PENYWAUN	3	3	3	9
PONTYCLUN	5	6	7	18
PONTYPRIDD	24	43	125	192
PORTH	5	14	36	55
RHIGOS		1	7	8





TAFFS WELL	2	2	16	20
TONYPANDY	5	10	35	50
TONYREFAIL	16	11	40	67
TREALAW	10	10	22	42
TREHERBERT	8	18	77	103
TREORCHY	10	28	80	118
TYLORSTOWN	19	28	113	160
YNYSHIR	6	3	21	30
YNYSYBWL	6	3	15	24
YSTRAD	4	17	39	60
	<b>248</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>1310</b>	<b>1964</b>

Period Empty	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	T	U	Grand Total
7 - 12 Months	163	54	12	8	6	2	3					248
1 - 2 Years	255	80	41	17	7	2		1		3		406
2 years +	825	274	110	45	21	11	6	2	2	13	1	1310
	<b>1243</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1964</b>

**APPENDIX 2 - DISTRIBUTION OF SECOND HOMES BY COMMUNITY AREA AND PROPERTY BAND**

<b>Community Area</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
ABERAMAN	8	2						10
ABERCYNON	2	4		2				8
ABERDARE	10	5	7		1		1	24
CWM CLYDACH	6							6
CWMBACH	2	1		2				5
CYMMER	6	2				1		9
FERNDALE	9							9
GILFACH GOCH	3	2			1			6
HIRWAUN	3	2	2	1	2			10
LLANHARAN		6	3					9
LLANHARRY		1	1					2
LLANTRISANT	1	1	4	3		1		10
LLANTWIT FARDRE		1	9	3	3	1		17
LLWYDCOED	1	2		3			1	7
LLWYNYPIA	3	1						4
MAERDY	6							6
MOUNTAIN ASH	9			1	1	1		12
PENRHIWCEIBER	6							6
PENTRE	5	2	1					8
PENYGRAIG	1	3	2					6
PENYWAUN				1	1			2
PONTYCLUN	1		2	3	1	1		8
PONTYPRIDD	8	23	20	2	2	2		57
PORTH	6	1						7
TAFFS WELL	1		2	2				5



TONYPANDY	3		2					5
TONYREFAIL	3	5	1	1				10
TREALAW	2							2
TREHERBERT	12		2	1		1		16
TREORCHY	16	9		1				26
TYLORSTOWN	10							10
YNYSHIR	6	1						7
YNYSYBWL	2	1	2					5
YSTRAD	10	1		1				12
	<b>161</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>346</b>

*\*Temporary Band awaiting confirmation from the Valuation Office Agency e.g. new build property*

*\*\*Property temporarily removed from the Valuation List e.g. property beyond economic repair*

### APPENDIX 3 – SCHEDULE OF COUNCIL TAX EXEMPTIONS

Class A	Dwellings requiring or undergoing major repair or structural alteration to render it habitable	Available for a maximum period of 12 months, following which council tax payable at 100%
Class B	Unoccupied dwellings owned by a charity	
Class C	New Properties	Available for a maximum period of 6 months, following which council tax payable at 100%
Class C	Dwellings that have become vacant	Available for a maximum period of 6 months, following which council tax payable at 100%
Class D	Dwelling left unoccupied by persons detained elsewhere e.g., prison	
Class E	Dwelling left unoccupied by persons living in a care home or a hospital	
Class F	Unoccupied dwelling where the liable person is deceased and waiting for probate or letters of administration to be granted (exemption continues for up to six months after being granted)	
Class G	Dwelling left unoccupied where occupation is prohibited by law	
Class H	Unoccupied dwelling held available for a Minister of Religion	
Class I	Dwelling left unoccupied by a person requiring personal care	
Class J	Dwelling left unoccupied by a person providing care	
Class K	Dwelling left unoccupied by a student	
Class L	Unoccupied dwelling where there is a mortgagee in possession	
Class M	Halls of residence	
Class N	Dwellings occupied solely by students, school or college leavers or by certain spouses or dependents of students	
Class O	Armed Forces Accommodation (UK Forces)	
Class P	Dwellings occupied by Members and Dependents of Visiting Forces	
Class Q	A dwelling left empty by a bankrupt	
Class R	Unoccupied Caravan Pitches and Moorings for Boats	
Class S	Properties occupied solely by persons under 18	
Class T	An unoccupied annexe to an occupied dwelling	
Class U	Properties occupied solely by severely mentally impaired persons (SMI)	
Class V	Dwellings occupied by Diplomats	
Class W	Occupied Annexes	
Class X	Dwellings occupied by Care Leavers	

## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CABINET

12<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2022

### SUPPORT TO REFUGEES, UKRAINE NATIONALS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN RCT

#### REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH COUNCILLOR BOB HARRIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES

Author: Cheryl Emery, Head of Community Safety and Community Housing.

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the support being provided by the Council to refugees, Ukraine nationals and asylum seekers in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) and outlines the considerable work undertaken by the Council and our partner organisations, to respond positively and as effectively as possible across all the resettlement schemes.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the increasing numbers of refugees, Ukrainian nationals and asylum seekers being resettled in RCT and the emerging housing, support and financial demands this presents.
- 2.2 Note the significant actions being taken to support and welcome people re-settling in RCT by the Council, our partners and stakeholders.

#### 3. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council continues to operate sustainably across all UK resettlement schemes. The Council has robust systems in place to support those moving to RCT, and these have evolved in recent years as our experience and understanding of resettlement has grown.

- 3.2 The excellent local partnership work taking place between the Council, third sector organisations, CTM University Health Board and the very strong links with Further and Higher Education establishments within the Authority, ensures the coordinated approach to resettlement work in RCT has received widespread recognition. Participation in long standing and new UK resettlement schemes allows us to build on this partnership approach and contribute to the Welsh Government's (WG) stated ambition for Wales as a Nation of Sanctuary.
- 3.3 The Council's voluntary participation in many resettlement programmes enables the local authority and our communities to share in the global responsibility to provide a safe and legal route to the UK for some of the most vulnerable displaced people, wherever humanitarian need is greatest.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

##### **REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMMES IN RCT**

- 4.1 The Council is committed to providing support to refugee families assessed by the United Nations as particularly vulnerable and therefore eligible for formal resettlement.
- 4.2 Resettlement is organised through different government funded schemes and overseen by the Home Office. In addition to support from the Council, families have allocated support workers from the Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) who help them to re-adjust, orientate, and understand UK systems and services alongside providing practical support with day-to-day living and working towards independence by the end of the support period. The Council currently works with the Home Office to resettle displaced people, refugees and asylum seekers in RCT through the following schemes:

##### **UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)**

- 4.3 The Home Office has established the UKRS to identify the most vulnerable refugees, who have been assessed for resettlement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). These vulnerable refugees are nominated for resettlement in the UK mainly from the Middle East (notably Syria) and North Africa, but also from refugee camps in other areas.
- 4.4 This scheme replaces schemes in which the Council has actively participated since 2015, namely the:
- **Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS)** (2016 to 2021), which resettled 20,000 people in the UK. *In RCT, we have*

**resettled 11 families (50 individuals) since our participation in the programme.** 3 of those families (10 individuals) have since moved to live in other parts of the UK.

- **Resettlement of Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) (2017 to 2021),** which resettled 3,000 people in the UK. **2 families (5 individuals) were resettled in RCT** and 1 family (2 individuals) has since returned to Turkey.

4.5 At this time, RCT has a total of 9 families (43 individuals) from across both the VPRS and VCRS programmes that continue to reside in the borough who are settled and state they are happy.

4.6 Rhondda Cynon Taf's first family arrival for the newly established UKRS is expected in January 2023.

#### **Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)**

4.7 The Council is also participating fully in the National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) overseen by the Director of Children Services in RCT in partnership with Bridgend County Borough Council and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. While still waiting on the final distribution of the number of UASC to be accommodated across Cwm Taf Morgannwg, to date, two properties (offering 8 units of private rented accommodation) have been secured in the RCT with **5 unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people accommodated to date** and receiving support from Children's Services.

#### **Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)**

4.8 In preparation for the withdrawal of UK troops in Afghanistan, the Home Office established the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP). ARAP offers the opportunity for resettlement to locally employed staff and their families who worked for the UK government in Afghanistan. While Afghan families are awaiting resettlement in the UK with a local authority, the Home Office provides them with hotel accommodation. The resettlement of Afghan families operates in the same way as the resettlement of families from Syria and other areas of the world facing humanitarian crises. The Council has been an active participant in the ARAP scheme since 2016 following a Cabinet decision.

4.9 **To date RCT has resettled 6 Afghan families, (29 individuals),** and with the help of our commissioned specialist support provider, the WRC, these families have been supported to integrate into the community and all children have been enrolled in local schools.

- 4.10 While continuing to actively support the ARAP scheme, the provision of additional properties for the Afghan (ARAP) scheme is proving a challenge due to the limited availability of suitable, sustainable accommodation for these households.

### **UK ASYLUM DISPERSAL SCHEME**

- 4.11 On the [17th June 2021](#) Cabinet agreed that the Council would become an asylum dispersal area, working with the Home Office, Wales Strategic Migration Partnership (WSMP) and Clear Spring's Ready Homes to support and accommodate 5 families with a review of the operation of the scheme in RCT after an initial period of 12 months.
- 4.12 During April 2022 however, the Home Office announced a new 'Full Dispersal' approach for the UK. This requires all local authorities in England and Wales to become asylum dispersal areas due to continual high numbers of arrivals into the UK applying for asylum protection. At that time, over 10,000 individuals were in temporary accommodation (including hotels and migrant camps) in England, mainly in the Kent area, placing overwhelming pressure on local council services.
- 4.13 The WSMP is leading the development of regional plan arrangements on behalf of the 22 local authorities in Wales. Based on the 2011 Census Data, there is a requirement for Wales to offer over 2300 bedspaces, secured by Clear Spring's Ready Homes on behalf of UK Government, in order to house approximately 2344 people seeking asylum. The WSMP has developed a Dispersal Plan for Wales, following engagement with all 22 LAs and this must be agreed by the Home Office.
- 4.14 The key strategic principles of the intended approach across Wales are: strategic intent as a Nation of Sanctuary; immediate integration; access to advice and services; taking a trauma informed approach; partnership working; sustainable funding; effective coordination; voluntary and community sector support; and equity and fairness.
- 4.15 Beyond these strategic principles, there are also agreed key operating principles, which include:
- Consultation with LAs on selected properties to share local insight;
  - Effective data sharing and contract compliance from providers;
  - Procurement of properties in an area limited by criteria i.e. dispersal limits per LA area, move on ceilings (ensure all areas achieve 75% of their allocation before increasing numbers in any one area), procurement to not cause escalation in local market rents;



- Properties procured directly from private landlords taking into account specific local needs and safeguarding;
- Any proposed use of contingency accommodation/large scale sites will be shared by the Home Office with councils, WSMP and Welsh Government in advance.

4.16 In terms of the expectation for each local authority, it will be based on population-based apportionment with two models being considered for Wales:

- **Model 1- 22 LA model based on population share**
- **Model 2- 19 LA model** (with any population split taking into account Cardiff, Swansea, and Newport’s existing active involvement meaning these areas are either already, or close to, fulfilling their proportional rates based on existing long-term participation)

4.17 The table below outlines proposed share for the Rhondda Cynon Taf area, based on both apportionment models:

Local Authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf
Census 2011 population	234,410
A Max number (200:1 ratio)	1,172
S 75% of 200:1	879
C Allocation by Dec 23 Model 1	179
a Allocation by Dec 23 Model 2	236

ABased on the above allocations **by the end of December 2023, it is proposed that between 179 to 236 asylum seekers will be located to Rhondda Cynon Taf**, subject to the availability of appropriate accommodation, and input from the local authority on gathered local intelligence.

4.18 As this Council had already engaged proactively with the Home Office following the previous Cabinet decision, the first meeting on the proposed new dispersal model occurred with Council representatives on 25 July 2022, and a fortnightly engagement meeting is now established between officers and Clear Spring’s Ready Homes.

4.19 New private rented properties proposed by Clear spring’s Ready Homes to house individuals on the Asylum Dispersal scheme are always considered and reviewed by the Community Safety Partnership, Police, Health, Education and Housing to ensure that they are appropriate although the Home Office sets out limited reasons to object to potential properties being used. Part of this work involves a

consideration of local policing issues, availability and capacity of health care and the provision of local school places.

**To date 1 family has been placed in an RCT property.** The asylum-seeking family are supported by Clear Spring's Ready Homes whilst their asylum claim is determined by the Home Office. They have been provided with housing and wrap around support to meet their essential needs. Both Clear Spring's Ready Homes along with Migrant Help provide the support and there have been no issues to-date reported to the Council.

There has been a total of 24 potential properties in the RCT area identified by Clear springs Ready Homes, 5 of which Clear Spring's Ready Homes have determined they are no longer pursuing.

### **THE UKRAINE RESPONSE**

- 4.20 The UK Government's Homes for Ukraine Response was launched on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 2022 to support thousands of people displaced by the war. These arrangements support three UK visa entry routes for Ukrainian nationals fleeing the conflict in Ukraine

**The Family Visa:** extended family members already living in the UK can apply for a 3-year visa for family members. The Ukraine Family Scheme is an extension of the existing family visa process which has been amended to extend the definition of 'close' and 'extended' family member and to remove the income test and the requirement for payment to apply. Families are expected to live together, and Ukrainian nationals will have immediate access to benefits and public services, and the right to work and study. Local authorities have not been allocated a formal role in this scheme, are not in receipt of information on the number of refugees arriving in their area under this scheme and are not being funded to support refugees arriving through this route.

**The UK Government Homes for Ukraine Scheme:** individual hosts offer space in their home or accommodation they have available to unrelated arrivals within the scheme.

**The Welsh Government Super-Sponsor:** where visas are applied for on the basis on national sponsorship with accommodation and support provided by Welsh Government.

All visas permit those Ukrainians who arrive under any of these arrangements to live and work in the UK for up to 3 years and access benefits, healthcare, employment.

### **The Council's Ukraine Response**

## **The Family Visa Entry Route**

- 4.21 Capture of this information is entirely dependent of individual residents seeking service support. Although UK Government does not provide any financial support for Council to help those arriving under this visa route, the Council has put in place an equitable support package for those who become known to services including: a Wellbeing Assessment; £200 emergency support payment and 6 months free Leisure for Life Membership for both the Ukrainian nationals and their family.

***Currently in RCT, 11 Ukrainian individuals who entered the UK via a Family Visa have requested support/further assistance.***

## **The UK Government's Homes for Ukraine Scheme**

- 4.22 In response to meeting the needs of Ukraine nationals arriving under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, in early March 2022, a new multi-disciplinary Humanitarian Response Group (HuG) was set up by the Council. This Team comprised Senior Officers from Community Development Team, Adult and Children Services, Education, the Customer Contact Centre. This Senior Council Officer Team implemented Council process to receive Welsh Government Data and referral pathways into the Council.
- 4.23 The Homes for Ukrainian Scheme allows private individuals (hosts) to sponsor named Ukrainians. Each sponsor household is entitled to a UK Government £350 'thank you' payment per month (up to a maximum of 12) administered by local authority. Host properties are subject to a property check by Council Officer against UK Government standards and hosts are required to undergo a DBS check as part of safeguarding procedures. Upon arrival in the County Borough, and within 3 working days if children have arrived with adults, the Humanitarian Response Team will arrange a visit to each Ukrainian at the property of the host to conduct a holistic Wellbeing Assessment. This ensures initial support is made available to both the arrivals and hosts as well as providing ongoing referrals to statutory and other support services as required including the resettlement team. The completion of the Wellbeing Assessment ensures that host 'thank you' payments and guest emergency support payments of £200 are processed efficiently.
- 4.24 On completion of the Wellbeing Assessment arrivals are referred for support from the Councils newly established Resettlement Team with the staffing structure consisting of a manager and 3 temporary Resettlement Officers. The Resettlement Team provides advice,

support, and integration support for up to 12 months, which includes welfare benefits, health, employment, housing advice, safeguarding, mediation and community links.

The Resettlement Team are currently supporting all families and individuals that have arrived in RCT under any of the UK refugee and resettlement schemes. This includes **54 hosts across the borough who have welcomed Ukrainian guests** into their homes. Support is also being made available to **106 guests in host placements and 1 family that has recently moved on from an RCT Welcome Centre having secured their own accommodation**. This equates to a total of 74 adults and 32 children. To date, the team have assisted 17 households to move out of their host placement and secure alternative accommodation. It is pleasing to note 34 Ukrainian guests residing with hosts have been supported to secure employment.

- 4.25 Longer term planning and ongoing support after the provision of accommodation by sponsors comes to an end is currently unclear, particularly for housing. Hosts are entitled to receive 'thank you' payments for up to 12 months and were required to commit to a minimum of 6 months of hosting. As covered throughout this report, Ukrainian guests are entitled to statutory support, including homelessness provision, which creates a significant risk for the council if move on cannot be secured for Ukraine nationals before hosting arrangements end, due to the already high demand for temporary accommodation in respect of single homeless people.

The Resettlement Team also work closely with host arrangements to help prevent breakdown of relationship and avoid the risk of homelessness. To date the Council has only received one homelessness presentation due a Ukrainian guest experiencing domestic abuse who was later placed in refuge and accommodated in another borough.

### **Welsh Government Super Sponsor Scheme and Welcome Centres**

- 4.26 In addition, and in response to the Ukrainian crisis, the Council has worked with partners to establish Welcome Centre provision in RCT, offering immediate, initial accommodation to Ukrainian Nationals arriving under the WG Super Sponsor Scheme. Welcome Centres are intended as short-term accommodation pending move on being secured to more sustainable, independent accommodation. Welcome Centres are established according to detailed WG specifications in terms of support on site, education and play provision, meals and access to immediate and on-going health and trauma support. Funding is provided by WG to cover the costs of operating Welcome Centres.

## **Welcome Centre A**

- 4.27 Discussions with WG commenced early May 2022 to establish and open a Welcome Centre within RCTCBC. With a location confirmed, immediate work was undertaken by the Council to make the location suitable for the needs of those fleeing Ukraine and to offer a secure and safe environment for guests. This Welcome Centre is for families only and was the first Welcome Centre in Wales to accommodate pets.
- 4.28 Senior Officers worked closely with a Hotelier to take responsibility for the accommodation and security of the site, as well as working with a local catering company to provide the expected fully catered meal provision.
- 4.29 To comply with guidance from Welsh Government and to offer an effective response, a Multi-Agency Team was established to provide the wrap around support families may require. This included Council Teams (Community Development, Adult and Children Services, Employment Support, Youth Engagement and Participation, Play Teams, Staying Well @ Work) and with external partners- Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board, Citizens Advice, Health, DWP, British Red Cross, Coleg yr Cymoedd, University of South Wales, South Wales Police, Mental Health Services, Save the Children and Barod.
- 4.30 Ukrainian families are provided with a full Wellbeing Assessment on arrival which captures the journey to the UK and RCT and seeks to identify any areas of specialist need such as disabilities or trauma responses. The Humanitarian Response Team have all received training in relation to Trauma Informed practice provided by CTM Health colleagues. With daily ongoing support provided to access GP appointments, secure employment, and engage in ESOL and other Education both on and off site. A programme of ESOL sessions have been run on site and off site at the University of South Wales, along with Council Play Teams delivering opportunities to the children.

Guests are provided with support to access the full range of support available to all residents of RCT, this includes access to the Council's Employment Support Service. All members of the family receive their £200 emergency support payment on arrival and access to free Leisure for Life Membership for 6 months.

- 4.31 On the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 2022, the Minister for Social Justice, Jane Hutt (MS) and the Minister for Constitution, Mick Antoniw (MS) attended the Welcome Centre to welcome the families to RCT. The families were provided the opportunity to speak with both Ministers about their personal experiences and highlight any further support needs.

- 4.32 The Centre has welcomed a **total of 14 families** between the 29<sup>th</sup> of June and 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022. 2 families have since returned to Europe, 1 family has returned to Ukraine and 1 family successfully moving into private rented accommodation having secured local employment and become financially independent. At present, there are 10 families at the Centre, comprising 19 adults and 19 children.

All families have been provided with ongoing wrap around support and family plans to help facilitate move on arrangements and all school aged children have secured education, of which 3 are in a college placement. Councils play a key role in supporting the integration of Ukrainian families into their local communities with employment support offered to all working age adults and 6 Adults assisted (to date) to secure local employment.

The Centre will continue to operate until 31.3.23 with any remaining guests supported by the Council and WG to find alternative accommodation by that date.

### **Welcome Centre B**

- 4.33 Discussions with Welsh Government and a third party commenced late early June 2022 to add an additional single occupancy Welcome Centre in RCT.

The Humanitarian Response Team are responsible for the wrap around support and assessment of wellbeing at this site and continue to follow the same process and partnership working approaches established for Welcome Centre A. Accommodation and catering are the responsibility of the hosting party.

- 4.34 **56 single adults have arrived on site** between 11<sup>th</sup> July to the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022 with 4 individuals deciding to leave the Welcome Centre before an assessment of wellbeing could be completed. Currently there are 32 individuals residing at Welcome Centre B with 18 adults securing employment to-date. The Centre will continue to operate until 31.1.23 and again, guests at the Centre will need to be supported by the Council and WG to find alternative accommodation prior to closure of the Centre.

### **Challenges to Secure Sustainable Housing for Ukrainian Nationals**

- 4.35 Despite all Ukrainian guests being provided with support and plans to help facilitate move on, there are significant challenges in finding suitable move on accommodation. This is due to the current housing crisis and the limited availability of properties in both the social and private sector. Most Ukrainians are eligible to receive Universal Credit

or are in low income employment, which makes many of the available properties in the private rented sector unaffordable in the absence of additional financial help to meet significant rent shortfalls.

- 4.36 Move on is becoming critical with Welcome Centre B due to close on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023. Most Ukrainian guests placed in the Centre are single people in need of 1 bedroom accommodation which is largely unaffordable for them and with limited availability of suitable housing stock in all parts of RCT.
- 4.37 Welcome Centre A is also earmarked for closure in March 2023 with many families settled in the local area and all children attending schools. The challenge will be to secure affordable and suitable accommodation for their needs in the local area.
- 4.38 Many host arrangements are at the point of breakdown with hosts advising they are not able to accommodate Ukrainian guests for an extended period beyond the initial 6 months they agreed to. UK Government thank you payments for hosts also end after a maximum of 12 months post arrival.
- 4.39 Some Ukrainian guests have indicated that they do not wish to remain in RCT and wish to seek housing in larger cities such as Cardiff and Swansea which are at saturation point in respect of available, affordable housing.
- 4.40 Funding arrangements for the Resettlement Team are also uncertain with all roles currently funded using the tariff payments and grants received by the Council as part of the WG and UK Government funding support for Councils and currently there is no commitment at this time of any longer- term funding arrangements.
- 4.41 In order to increase the general supply of social housing, during 22/23 the WG has made available additional capital funding for housing associations to return long term empty properties into use as transitional housing. While these properties are not specifically for Ukraine nationals, the additional supply of housing will help ease pressure on the local housing register. Both RHA and Trivallis Housing Associations have made successful bids for funding totalling £995,262 that will deliver 16 houses for occupation in RCT by 31.3.2023.

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

- 5.1 This report is provided for information only and seeks to update Cabinet on the Council's ongoing and proactive participation in a wide range of UK Programmes to support displaced Ukrainians, refugees

and asylum seekers of all ages who have to leave their homes as a result of conflicts or persecution. The Council seeks to ensure the specific needs of individuals arriving via the resettlement programmes are met by applying the guidance issued by WG and UK Government in the operation of all schemes.

## **6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no Welsh Language implications arising from the content of this report.

## **7 CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

- 7.1 There are no consultation implications arising from this report however involvement of key partners and engagement with refugees and displaced persons are ongoing and established processes.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 All of the UK resettlement schemes identified in this report are funded through varying Home Office grants available to the Council. All are time limited funding arrangements and are bespoke to the scheme under which an individual arrives in the UK and include:

- For the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP), the tariff funding tapers over three years after arrival, with the initial tariff set at £10,500 and with associated tapering amount for education support depending on a child's age.
- The United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme funding package available will mirror that currently paid under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme and previously reported to Cabinet.
- For Asylum Dispersal, UK Government provide £3500 for any new accommodation spaces occupied in any given year. This is a one off payment upon first occupation of a bed space.

- 8.2 The Homes for Ukraine response has many complex financial arrangements, each depending on the arrival route agreed by UK and WG. Payments are time limited with most UK Government funded components due to end by March 2023. Claims are made retrospectively based on numbers of Ukraine nationals in the County. Each individual attracts a payment tariff of £10,500 with additional payments for education support dependant of the age of the child. UK Government also reimburses the Council for the £350 monthly thank you payment to hosts and the emergency support payments to arrivals which are administered on their behalf.



8.3 The operating costs of the accommodation providers for the Welcome Centres and funding for the specialist wrap around support mobilised by the Council are met by WG.

8.4 The combined impacts of the various resettlement schemes and spontaneous arrivals creates significant ongoing financial pressure on local services including housing, education and health particularly in the context of previous Covid-related demand, emerging cost of living issues and high numbers of households placed in temporary accommodation in the borough.

**9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

9.1 The Council has full regard to any legal implications and legislation in respect of the Council's response to meeting the needs of refugees and asylum seekers and follows Government policy and guidance in respect of resettlement arrangements.

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

10.1 The positive progress the Council continues to make across all UK Resettlement Programmes contributes to the Council's Corporate three main priorities as follow:

Ensuring People are independent, healthy and successful: Community integration is a key objective in our work with refugees, to help them overcome and or manage their health needs to become healthy and independent and to lead successful lives in RCT. All Displaced People, Refugees and Asylum Seekers have access to support services both from the Council and other partners that meet their needs. Much emphasis is placed on providing services which help them learn English and in helping them improve their skills and accessing employment. All children within families are supported to access education and college provision.

Creating places: where proud to live work and play: Tackling isolation is also a key element of our Resettlement work helping build up well - being, personal confidence and self- esteem helping individuals to integrate and engage in activities their local communities. We also work closely with other Council departments i.e., Communities for Work to assist individuals to access volunteering, training, and employment opportunities.

Enabling prosperity: creating the opportunity for people and businesses: to be innovative; be entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper: In recognition many of the refugees we work with are

professionals and have fled high paid jobs. Many are encouraged to take up their old roles where possible and to learn new life skills which can help provide access to new employment opportunities as well as enable them to prosper and seek their own personal goals.

10.2 The Sustainable Development Principle and the 5 ways of working have been fully considered in our participation in the Resettlement Programmes which are heavily focused on meeting the long-term needs of refugees and asylum seekers through the provision of affordable housing, access to education and employment and provision of ongoing support.

10.3 In consideration of the seven wellbeing goals, the objective is to improve the quality of life for people being supported by Resettlement Programmes in RCT through the provision of many interventions. These include highlighting clients who will need long term support to help them sustain their home as well as integrate into their local communities and help them to work to their strengths and support them to achieve their aspirations.

## **11. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS**

11.1 The Resettlement Programmes work across the whole of the County Borough to support and house displaced people, refugees and those seeking asylum.

## **12. CONCLUSIONS**

12.1 To date, over 320 refugees, asylum seekers and Ukraine nationals have been supported into accommodation in RCT with new arrivals weekly under the various schemes. As a result of the UK Asylum Dispersal Scheme, these numbers are expected to increase significantly in the next 12 months. Many of these arrivals have already been supported to secure employment, education, health services and sustainable housing through the multi-disciplinary work of a wide range of Council Departments and the support of external partners including the local health board.

12.2 The Council has a long-established commitment to supporting those unable to remain in their home country and make a positive contribution to ensuring Wales is a Nation of Sanctuary

12.3 Cabinet is recommended to note the challenges and actions being taken in response to delivery of the resettlement programmes in Rhondda Cynon Taf by Council staff and its many partner organisations.

**Other Information: *Relevant Scrutiny Committee:***  
Community 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**

**12<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2022**

**SUPPORT TO REFUGEES, UKRAINE NATIONALS AND ASYLUM  
SEEKERS IN RCT**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND  
COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH COUNCILLOR BOB  
HARRIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES**

**Background Papers**

17<sup>th</sup> June 2021 - Cabinet

Officer to contact:

Cheryl Emery, Head of Community Safety and Community Housing

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