



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**A hybrid meeting of the CABINET will be held on
Monday, 23rd January, 2023 at 4.00 pm**

Contact: Hannah Williams - Council Business Unit (Tel No. 07385406118)

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 12pm on the Friday 20th January 2023. 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

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 meetings held on 5th December 2022 and 12th December 2022 as an accurate record.

(Pages 5 - 14)

3. UK GOVERNMENT'S SHARED PROSPERITY FUND: RHONDDA CYNON TAF COMMUNITY GRANT

To receive the joint report of the Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services and the Director of Prosperity and Development, which provides a proposal for the establishment and delivery of a Community Grant for Rhondda Cynon Taf, via allocation from the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund.

(Pages 15 - 24)

4. HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY AND COUNCIL WORKFORCE PLAN 2023-2028

To receive the report of the Director of Human Resources, which enables Cabinet to consider, review and approve the Human Resources Strategy 2023-28 and the Council Workforce Plan 2023-28.

(Pages 25 - 62)

5. WASTE SERVICES - REVISED WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

To receive the report of the Director of Frontline Services, which provides feedback from the 5-week public consultation period during December 2022 – January 2023 with respect to proposed revisions to the Council's operational waste management processes regarding future arrangements for the collection of refuse and recycling designed to aid an increase in the rate of recycling across RCT, whilst also offering financial efficiencies and to help inform a Cabinet decision on the way forward.

(Pages 63 - 166)

6. COMMUNITY MEALS SERVICE SERVICE REVIEW

To receive the report of the Director of Education and Inclusion Services, which provides feedback from the public consultation period during December 2022 – January 2023 with respect to the proposed revisions to the Council's Community Meals Service.

(Pages 167 - 252)

7. COUNCIL RUN NURSERY PROVISION - REVISED SERVICE DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

To receive the report of the Interim Director of Social Services, which provides the Cabinet with details of the current arrangements for the delivery of childcare provision at Council run nurseries and sets out revised service delivery options for consideration to further improve the local childcare offer available to families, informed by a recent market testing exercise.

(Pages 253 - 314)

8. THE COUNCIL'S FEES AND CHARGES POLICY 2023-2024

To receive the report of the Director of Finance and Digital Services, which sets out the proposed revisions to Council fees and charges levels for the financial year 2023/24 (all to be effective from 1st April 2023 or as soon as is practicable thereafter).

(Pages 315 - 330)

9. THE COUNCIL'S 2023-2024 REVENUE BUDGET

To receive the report of the Director of Finance and Digital Services, which provides Cabinet with information in respect of the 2023/24 Local Government settlement and the outcomes of the budget consultation phase 1 exercise, to assist with its deliberations in formulating the revenue budget strategy for the financial year 2023/24, which it will recommend to Council, for approval.

(Pages 331 - 416)

10. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any urgent business as the Chairman feels appropriate.



Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Circulation:-

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

Officers: Paul Mee, Chief Executive
Barrie Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Louise Davies, Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services
Richard Evans, Director of Human Resources
Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
David Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Andy Wilkins, Director of Legal Services
Neil Elliott, Interim Director of Social Services
Paul Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services
Christian Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Derek James, Service Director – Prosperity & Development



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 5 December 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 M Norris
Councillor B Harris

Officers in attendance

Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
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 N Elliott, Director of Adult Services

84 Declaration of Interest

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

85 Minutes

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 21st November 2022 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

86 Leader's Scheme of Delegation

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to note the updated Scheme of Delegation.

87 Residential Care for Older People

The Director of Adult Services provided Members with the preferred options on the future provision of accommodation with care for older people in each of the Council's nine residential care homes and seeks approval to consult, where relevant, with the current residents and their families, staff and other stakeholders to enable the Cabinet to make informed decisions on the preferred options for each home. The Director also provided the Cabinet with the comments and feedback of the Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee following its consideration of the report at the meeting held on 29th November 2022.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care thanked the Director for the comprehensive report and was pleased to note the opportunity for further investment in residential care for older people, despite the current financial climate. The Cabinet Member felt that the proposals would provide a positive pathway to ensure dignity and respect in old age, with modern extra care homes, which would include provision for complex needs and support for those with learning disabilities in adulthood. The Cabinet Member voiced his support for the proposals and was of the view that they would enhance the health and wellbeing for older people in RCT. The Cabinet Member concluded by thanking the Scrutiny Committee for its valuable comments and expressed that he looked forward to receiving the results of the public consultation, should the report be approved.

The Deputy Leader spoke of the surplus of beds in some of the existing residential facilities and commented that the current provision did not meet the standards required. The Deputy Leader expressed that the Councils must change with the times and explained that the new high-end facilities would provide greater choice for older people, including married couples who sometimes must be separated as the facilities are not available. The Deputy Leader also took the opportunity to thank the Scrutiny Committee for the work undertaken in respect of the proposals.

The Leader spoke of the significant package of investment and as a Local Member for Mountain Ash was pleased to note the proposal for a facility in the ward which would be a mixture of residential, dementia and extra care; and the similar packages offered for both Treorchy and Ferndale. The Leader also spoke of the package offered for the South of the Borough, which would repurpose homes for people with supported needs and explained that a similar model had been a success in both the Cynon and Rhondda.

The Leader spoke of the direction of change in older people accommodation and the fact that the pandemic had accelerated the need for the Council to meet the needs. It was explained that many people prefer to be supported at home, and that those in a residential setting often need a higher level of support.

In respect of the process, the Leader assured Members that meetings were taking place with staff and Trade Unions to discuss any concerns. In terms of the residents, the Leader made it clear that any new buildings would be built in the first instance, to ensure residents are only moved once.

When questioned about the cost of the significant investment, the Leader explained that the three Extra Care facilities package alone equates to over £50M; and that the three new homes with residential, dementia and extra care provision and the remodelling of the Garth Olwg home would be in the range of £60M but the exact cost had yet to be determined.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the information in the report and the comments and feedback arising from the pre-scrutiny of the draft report undertaken Overview & Scrutiny Committee;
2. To the preferred options, as set out in Section 6, to retain the current service provision at the five Council residential care homes listed below:

- Clydach Court (Trealaw)
 - Pentre House (Pentre)
 - Tegfan (Trecynon)
 - Cae Glas (Hawthorn)
 - Parc Newydd (Talbot Green)
3. To initiate public consultation with the individuals and their families and staff who were relocated from Ystrad Fechan Care in August this year, and other relevant stakeholders on the preferred option to permanently decommission Ystrad Fechan care home and continue to explore with Linc Cymru and the Health Board the development of land near the existing care home to provide new accommodation with care provision, including 40 extra care apartments and 20 residential dementia care beds, along with other health and social care accommodation options depending on available development space and need, as set out in Section 6 of this report. Ystrad Fechan care home is currently temporarily closed and has no residents living there;
 4. To initiate public consultation with the current residents and their families, staff and other relevant stakeholders on the preferred option to work with Linc Cymru to explore options to develop land near the existing Ferndale House care home to provide new accommodation with care provision, including 20 extra care apartments and 10 residential dementia care beds and decommission Ferndale House care home when the new proposed alternative accommodation with care for older people provision is developed, as set out in Section 6 of the report;
 5. To initiate public consultation with the current residents and their families, staff and other relevant stakeholders on the preferred option to work with Linc Cymru to explore options to develop land near the existing Troedyrhiw care home to provide new accommodation with care provision, including 25 extra care apartments and 15 residential dementia care beds and decommission the Troedyrhiw care home when the new proposed alternative accommodation with care for older people provision is developed, as set out in Section 6 of the report;
 6. To initiate public consultation with the current residents and their families, staff and other relevant stakeholders on the preferred option to redevelop Garth Olwg care home to provide alternative accommodation with care to support people with learning disabilities in adulthood and decommission Garth Olwg care home for older people when suitable alternative placements are found for existing residents in a home of their choice which meets their assessed needs; and
 7. To receive a further report following conclusion of the proposed consultation, including an updated full Equality Impact Assessment prior to any final decision being made in relation to the preferred options on the future provision of accommodation for older people in the Council's residential care homes.

88 To consider passing the following Resolution:

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

89 Write Off of Irrecoverable Debts

Following the consideration of the report of the Director, Finance and Digital Services containing exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to the financial affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. to write-off the accounts set out in the attached schedule to the appropriate Bad Debt Provision contained within the Council's accounts (if further information on any debt becomes available, payment will be pursued).

This meeting closed at 1.20 pm

**Cllr A Morgan
Chairman.**



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 12 December 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 M Norris

Officers in attendance

Mr P Mee, Chief Executive
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 C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services
Mr. M. Phillips, Revenues Services Manager
C Emery, Interim Head Of Community Safety and Community Housing
Ms C O'Neill, Strategic Arts & Culture Manager

90 Welcome and Apology

The Leader welcomed attendees to the meeting and an apology for absence was received from the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities.

91 Declaration of Interest

On behalf of all Chief Officers present at the meeting, the Director of Legal Services declared a personal and pecuniary interest in respect of agenda item 7 due to the report referencing officer posts in the proposed Senior Leadership Team restructure.

The following Chief Officers left the meeting whilst the item was discussed and voted upon:

- * The Director of Legal Services
- * The Director of Education and Inclusion Services
- * The Director of Finance and Digital Services
- * The Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services
- * The Director of Prosperity and Development
- * The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication

The Chief Executive who authored and presented the report (as part of their statutory responsibilities) remained in the meeting.

92 Minutes

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 29th November 2022 as an accurate record.

93 Cabinet Work Programme

The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication provided the Cabinet with an update on the Cabinet Work Programme, which included the proposed list of matters requiring consideration by Cabinet over the 2022-23 Municipal Year.

The Deputy Leader commented that the Work Programme was a fluid document and could be amended according to the budget situation.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To approve the updated Work Programme for the 2022-23 Municipal Year (with appropriate amendment where necessary) and to receive a further update on a 3 monthly basis.

94 Council Tax Premiums - Long Term Empty Properties and Second Homes

The Director of Finance and Digital Services provided 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.

The Director spoke of the Cabinet meeting on 17th October 2022, whereby the Cabinet considered and agreed a new Empty Homes Strategy for 2022-2025 and agreed to undertake a consultation on the proposal to introduce a Council Tax Premium on Long Term Empty Properties. It was proposed that the premium for long term empty properties would be 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). 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.

The Director drew Cabinet's attention to Appendix 1 of the report, which detailed the responses to the consultation exercise that took place between 24th October and 21st November 2022.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services stated that the Council has discretionary powers to charge higher amounts 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. The Cabinet Member added that empty properties have a detrimental impact on communities and was in support of moving the original proposal which had been consulted upon.

The Leader spoke in support of the original proposal and noted that although most owners were against the proposals, the majority of the public were in support as the empty properties were considered to be a blight on communities. The Leader noted that the owners would have two years to renovate or sell the

property before the significant increase.

The Leader spoke of the Empty Property Grant which had been successful and advised that there would be an all-Wales programme for empty properties funded by the Welsh Government in the New Year.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the consultation feedback as attached at Appendix 1 of the report; 2. Having considered the consultation feedback, to proceed with the introduction of a premium as set out in the original proposal;
3. In line with the above to recommend the proposed way forward to Full Council; and
4. Subject to the above, to authorise the Director of Finance and Digital Services to put in place the necessary implementation arrangements.

95 Support to Refugees, Ukraine Nationals and Asylum Seekers in RCT

The Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services provided Cabinet with 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 partner organisations, to respond positively and as effectively as possible across all the resettlement schemes.

Members were informed that, to date, over 320 refugees, asylum seekers and Ukraine nationals had been supported into accommodation in RCT with new arrivals weekly under the various schemes listed within the report. As a result of the UK Asylum Dispersal Scheme, the numbers were expected to increase significantly in the next 12 months.

The Director advised that many of the arrivals had 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.

The Leader took the opportunity to thank the staff for going over and above despite the challenging timescales.

The Deputy Leader echoed the Leader's comments and expressed her profound thanks to the teams for the enormous amount of work undertaken. The Deputy Leader stated that it was heart-warming to witness the welcome and support delivered by RCT staff and partners; and went on to speak of an individual who was part of a scheme within the Ynysangharad War Memorial Park. The Deputy Leader was delighted that the individual had not only received a positive welcome and integrated well within the team but had won an award. The Deputy Leader was pleased to note that RCT Council were contributing to ensuring Wales is a nation of safe sanctuary.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services reiterated earlier comments and was proud to note the Council's long-established commitment to helping those unable to stay safely in their home country.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To 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; and

2. To note the significant actions being taken to support and welcome people resettling in RCT by the Council, our partners and stakeholders.

96 To consider Passing the Following Resolution:

It was **RESOLVED:** "That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of the exempt information as defined in paragraphs 12 and 13 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act".

97 Review of the Council's Senior Leadership Team Structure

Following the consideration of the report of the Chief Executive containing exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 and 13 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to the financial affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), the Chief Executive presented the report and it was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the revised directorate structures shown at Appendices 2(i), 2(ii) and 2(iii) of the report be implemented from 19 th January 2023 and Appendix 3(i) from 1st September 2023, subject to the necessary staff consultation process; 2. To note that implementation of the revised structures would provide an overall estimated reduction in annual management costs at the Senior grade levels of £78,000 (inclusive of on-costs);

3. To note that, as part of the ongoing efficiency savings programme, then subject to any required approval of the Council's Appointment's Committee, it would result in the deletion of the following posts from the Council's structure, in line with the above structural amendment dates in paragraph 2.1 of the report: i) Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director – Community & Childrens Services (Group Director grade); ii) Director of Finance & Digital Services (Director Level 1). iii) Director of Frontline Services (Director Level 1). iv) Service Director – Frontline Services (Level 2).

4. To note that emanating from the proposal in 2.1, Cabinet would be authorising: a) the amendment of the post Director – Prosperity & Development (Director Level 2) to Director – Prosperity & Development (Director Level 1); b) the amendment of the post Director – Public Health, Protection & Community Services (Director Level 2) to Director – Public Health, Protection & Community Services (Director Level 1); c) the amendment of the post Director – Legal Services (Director Level 2) to Director – Legal & Democratic Services (Director Level 1); d) the creation of the post of Deputy Chief Executive & Group Director – Finance, Digital & Frontline Services (Group Director grade); e) the creation of the post of Director – Social Services (Director Level 1); f) the creation of the post Director – Highways, Streetcare & Transportation Services (Director Level 2); g) a change of post title only from Head of Safeguarding & Standards (Head of Service Level 1) to Head of Service – Partnerships (Head of Service Level 1).

5. To, authorise the Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Director of Human Resources, to commence the staff consultation process in accordance with the Council's agreed Managing Change Policy and, thereafter implement the proposals;

6. That subject to the completion of the consultation process referred to at 2.5 of the report, and where necessary, refer the matter of the terms and conditions of employment and remuneration of the posts included in the proposed revised directorate's structure, shown at Appendices 2(i) to 2(iii) and Appendix 3(i) to the

Appointments Committee and/or full Council as appropriate;

7. To note that consequential changes would be required to the Council's Constitution in terms of the removal and creation of Chief Officer posts. directorate's structure, shown at Appendices 2(i) to 2(iii) and Appendix 3(i) to the Appointments Committee and/or full Council as appropriate; and

8. To note that consequential changes would be required to the Council's Constitution in terms of the removal and creation of Chief Officer posts.

N.B- *The following Chief Officers left the meeting whilst the item was discussed and voted upon:*

** The Director of Legal Services*

** The Director of Education and Inclusion Services*

** The Director of Finance and Digital Services*

** The Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services*

** The Director of Prosperity and Development*

** The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication*

This meeting closed at 1.30 pm

**Cllr A Morgan
Chairman.**

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23rd JANUARY 2023

UK GOVERNMENT'S SHARED PROSPERITY FUND: RHONDDA CYNON TAF COMMUNITY GRANT

REPORT OF DIRECTOR - PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AND DIRECTOR - PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT, IN DISCUSSIONS WITH COUNCILLOR BOB HARRIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES AND COUNCILLOR MARK NORRIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPERITY

Author: Caroline O'Neill, Head of Arts, Culture and Library Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides a proposal for the establishment and delivery of a Community Grant for Rhondda Cynon Taf, via allocation from the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider the content of the report.
- 2.2 Agree the establishment and delivery of the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund – Rhondda Cynon Taf Community Grant, as set out in this report.
- 2.3 Agree that ensuring the Community Grant operates within the terms and conditions of the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund be delegated to the designated Senior Responsible Officer, the Director of Prosperity and Development.

3. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund has been made available to all Local Authorities to provide significant support to invest in community spaces.
- 3.2 With the intention to strengthen the social fabric of communities, support community engagement, and build a sense of local pride and belonging in local community places, the Council has allocated £4.3 million of the UK

Government's Shared Prosperity Fund to build capacity and infrastructure to restore community places, thus creating the foundations for social, environmental, economic & cultural development, building relationships at a local neighbourhood-level.

- 3.3 It is proposed that this funding is used to establish a Community Grant, inviting applications from organisations within the Third Sector and Community Groups, Community Interest Companies, and Companies Limited by Guarantee to apply, via a competitive process, that will ensure an open and transparent approach.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The total funding allocated to the creation of a Community Grant equates to £4.3 million from January 2023 to 31st March 2025.

4.2 COMMUNITY GRANT PROFILE

- 4.2.1 The Community Grant will have circa. £3.8 million in revenue funding to distribute by 31st March 2025, including staffing costs associated with the management and administration of the grant.

- 4.2.2 Staffing costs equate to approximately £65,000 up to 31st March 2025, contributing to the new Communities Programme Manager post within the Community Development Team and a Compliance and Monitoring Officer post, which will also support the RCT SPF Multipty programme.

- 4.2.3 The Community Grant funding will have circa. £435,000 in capital funding to distribute for projects deliverable between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2025.

4.3 COMMUNITY GRANT – ELIGIBILITY

- 4.3.1 Eligibility criteria and the basis on which the grant support will be offered is defined by the interventions set out in the Community and Place Investment Priorities outlined within the Investment Plan submitted to UK Government.

- 4.3.2 The Community Grant will focus on the intervention to support community measures to reduce the cost of living, including through measures to improve energy efficiency, and combat fuel poverty and climate change.

- 4.3.3 Each project will need to demonstrate how they will achieve the outputs and outcomes identified for this intervention, collating the evidence and reporting this as outlined in their funding agreement, in line with that which the Council will be reporting to UK Government.



4.3.4 The table below outlines the outputs and outcomes associated with the Community Grant during 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25:

Outputs 2022/23	Outcomes 2022/23
Number of organisations receiving grants	Improved engagement numbers
Outputs 2023/24 and 2024/25	Outcomes 2023/24 and 2024/25
Number of organisations receiving grants	<p>Improved engagement numbers</p> <p>Increased amount of low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed</p> <p>Improved perceived/experienced accessibility</p> <p>Number of volunteering opportunities created as a result of support</p> <p>Improved perception of events</p>

4.4 **COMMUNITY GRANT DISTRIBUTION**

4.4.1 There is a risk to the expenditure of the year one allocation of revenue by 31st March 2023 as a result of the delay in the funding award from UK Government not being received until December 2022. This delay has created a significant pressure on the expenditure of the year one allocation.

4.4.2 To mitigate this risk, it is proposed that a two-phased approach to the distribution of the Community Grant is adopted, as detailed below:

Year	Capital Allocation	Revenue Allocation
2022-23 Phase 1	Total – 2022/23 - £0	<p>Total - 2022/23 - £675,000</p> <p>Community Grant Lower Level - Applications for between £1,000 and £14,999</p> <p>Community Asset Transfer Fund - £30,000</p>

2023-24 2024-25 Phase 2	&	Total - 2023/24 - £162,500 Total - 2024/25 - £350,049	2023/24 - £1,125,000 2024/25 - £2,000,000 Community Grant Lower Level - Applications for between £1,000 and £14,999 Medium Level - Applications for between £15,000 and £49,999 Higher Level - Applications for between £50,000 and £200,000 Neighbourhood Network Fund - £50,000 Community Asset Transfer Fund - £50,000
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4.4.3 The proposed application windows are:

- Phase 1 - Window 1: February 2023 – 28th February 2023, projects delivered by 31 March 2023.
- Phase 2 - Window 1: March 2023 for projects commencing 1st April 2023 and delivered by 31st March 2025.
- Phase 2 - Window 2: January to February 2024 for projects commencing 1st April 2024 and delivered by 31st March 2025.

4.4.4 Allocation of grant is required, as per UK Government guidance, to be a managed, competitive and transparent process, compliant with new Subsidy Control arrangements, and an appropriate fit with identified Shared Prosperity Fund interventions, their outputs and outcomes.

4.4.5 For year one, the proposal is to deliver the first phase: a managed, competitive application process for awards at the lower level, inviting applications for between £1,000 and £14,999 revenue-only to deliver projects that meet the identified intervention’s output and outcome, that adheres to guidance and with a quick turnaround.

4.4.6 This proposed approach for Phase 1 will have an impact on the continuation of projects funded via the Community Renewal Fund (CRF), a programme to provide “capacity funding to help places prepare for the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund” ([UK Community Renewal Fund: Prospectus](#)).

4.4.7 There have been seven CRF projects provided across Rhondda Cynon Taf:

- Improving Deaf Awareness and Supporting People with hearing loss in the Community (project delivery ended 31st August 2022).
- Connecting Teachers with Industry (project delivery ended 31st December 2022).
- Focus Enterprise RCT (project delivery ended 31st December 2022).



- Heal Your High Street (project delivery ended 31st December 2022).
- Ideas to Innovation (project delivery ended 31st December 2022).
- RCT 360 (project delivery ended 31st December 2022).
- Reconnect Youth (project delivery ended 31st December 2022).

- 4.4.8 Due to the delayed announcement from UK Government, the focused intervention, and the need to distribute funding via a managed, competitive and quick process, the opportunity for these projects to apply for funding above £14,999 will not be until Phase 2 (from April 2023 onwards).
- 4.4.9 Following project delivery end, the CRF projects will be focusing on evaluation which will support them to apply to the second phase of the SPF: Community Grant for which delivery will commence from 1st April 2023.
- 4.4.10 Phase 1 will also offset Community Asset Transfer costs from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023, circa. £30,000 to date, for projects that deliver the output and outcome of the identified intervention.
- 4.4.11 The Community Grant is predominantly revenue funding with a small allocation to support capital expenditure to support the sustainability of infrastructure to restore community places. Applications will be required to maximise financial resource through match funding from other sources beyond that of UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund, be that from the private, public and/or third sectors to maximise the value for money and impact of the grant.
- 4.4.12 Each year, applications will be appraised and assessed by a multi-disciplinary team of Council officers producing a shortlist of prioritised projects.
- 4.4.13 Shortlisted projects will then be discussed and agreed with the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities.
- 4.4.14 Not for personal profit organisations within the Third Sector and Community Groups, Community Interest Companies and Companies Limited by Guarantee will be eligible to apply.
- 4.4.15 It is proposed that the below form the guiding principles for all applications and that applications demonstrate how projects will:
- Benefit the community as a whole: multiple individuals, organisations, businesses.
 - Maximise impact and deliverability through collaborative working.
 - Maximise financial resource through match funding from other sources beyond that of UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund, be that from the private, public and third sectors to maximise the value for money and impact of the Shared Prosperity Fund: Community Grant.



- Demonstrate alignment with local and national strategic plans as well as local community need.
- Contribute to key objectives and outcomes of the Fund, including outcome/output indicators set out in Fund Eligibility Rules and Guidance.
- Consider equalities impacts.
- Deliver in accordance with branding requirements set out in Fund Eligibility Rules and Guidance.
- Meet the expectations for monitoring and evaluation, including appropriate costs to ensure that any project delivery, monitoring or evaluation obligations can be met from the approved project amount. As a minimum, successful applicants must develop an evaluation plan that is generally expected to be between 5-7% of their award to be dedicated to that evaluation with a minimum threshold of £2,000.
- Consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as per UK government guidance – as well as all other relevant legal obligations such as procurement. This will be tested as part of the appraisal process and monitored thereafter.
- Be financially completed (i.e. all delivery activity concluded) by 31 March 2025.
- Select a lead organisation to become the lead applicant (and grant recipient) if there is more than one organisation applying to deliver a project, with the remaining organisation(s) acting as delivery partner(s). In this situation the applicant would be responsible and liable for the delivery partner(s) and ensuring the project is operating as planned.

4.4.16 Examples of eligible expenditure is outlined as follows:

Capital

- Building and construction.
- Professional fees associated with building and construction.
- Plant and machinery.
- Any larger value item of equipment, assessed in accordance with the project deliverer's capitalisation policy. Items which do not meet this definition should be classed as revenue expenditure.

Revenue

- Salaries of staff directly engaged in an SPF: Community Grant funded project.
- Participant costs (such as allowances).

- Other costs that are solely attached to the delivery of the SPF: Community Grant funded project (other direct costs) e.g. room hire.

4.5 PROCESS AND PROCEDURES

4.5.1 Discussions have taken place with the Regional Shared Prosperity Fund Team, based within the Council's Prosperity and Development Service and the following documents have been developed and/or updated:

- Project Risk Log.
- GDPR - Privacy Notice.
- Data Protection Register.
- Retention and Disposal Schedule.
- Application Forms (Lower Level & Medium and Highest Level).
- Application Guidance.
- State Subsidy data capture and process.
- Process & standardised emails.
- Assessment Form.
- Grant Terms and Conditions.
- Offer Letters.
- Weighting assessment.
- End of Project Monitoring and Evaluation Form.

These documents are being reviewed now that UK Government requirements have been received.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO ECONOMIC DUTY

5.1 This report provides a proposal for Cabinet to approve the establishment and delivery of a UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund – Rhondda Cynon Taf Community Grant. The proposal seeks to ensure that all grant distribution is conducted in an equitable, fair and transparent manner, with consideration of the needs of its residents met by the identified resource.

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.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund – Rhondda Cynon Taf Community Grant will be wholly funded by the allocated £4.3 million identified in the local authorities Investment Plan to the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund.
- 8.2 The Community Development Team, who will manage and administer this scheme will also be wholly funded by the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2025, following their inclusion in the submitted local authority Investment Plan.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The Regional Central Shared Prosperity Fund Team, residing within the Council's Prosperity and Development Service, alongside Finance and Legal Service colleagues are providing advice and guidance in relation to subsidy control and ensuring that the scheme is consistent with the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

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

- 10.1 The proposal in this report is consistent with the key priorities in 'Making a Difference 2020-24':
- Ensuring People: are independent, healthy and successful.
 - Creating Places: where people are proud to live, work and play.
 - Enabling Prosperity: creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.
- 10.2 The proposal in this report will contribute to many Wellbeing Goals within the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, particularly:
- A more resilient Wales.
 - A prosperous Wales.
 - A Wales of cohesive communities.
- 10.3 The UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund – Rhondda Cynon Taf Community Grant will support prosperous and resilient communities by providing revenue and capital grants that increase engagement; improve accessibility; and increase the amount of low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed across community facilities; whilst also encouraging community connection.



11. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT ELECTORAL WARDS

11.1 The UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund – Rhondda Cynon Taf Community Grant proposal is for a county-wide scheme.

12. CONCLUSION

12.1 This report outlines a proposal to:

- Mitigate the risk of not meeting expenditure requirements in year one by approving a phased approach, with Phase 1 adopting a managed, competitive and quick application process for the delivery of lower level revenue grants from £1000 up to £14,999 and adhering to funding guidance.
- For Phase 2, adopt a process that invites applications once per annum for year two and year three: March 2023 for projects to commence 1st April 2023; and January 2024 for projects to commence 1st April 2024; all deliverable by 31st March 2025, across three funding thresholds: lower, medium and higher.
- Establish a multi-disciplinary panel of Council Officers to assess and appraise applications, producing a shortlist of prioritised projects to be discussed and agreed with Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities.
- Provide £50,000 per annum (year two and year three) to the existing Neighbourhood Network Fund for distribution to community organisations.
- Provide £100,000 across the two years to support Community Asset Transfers in Rhondda Cynon Taf.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23rd JANUARY 2023

**UK GOVERNMENT'S SHARED PROSPERITY FUND: RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COMMUNITY GRANT**

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

Background Papers:

None

Officer to contact:

Caroline O'Neill, Head of Arts, Culture and Library Services

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

Community Services Scrutiny Committee

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23rd JANUARY 2023

HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY AND COUNCIL WORKFORCE PLAN 2023-28

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNCILLOR M WEBBER

**Author: Corinne Havard, Senior Workforce Development Officer,
Human Resources**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to enable Cabinet to consider, review and approve the following:

- Human Resources Strategy 2023-28
- Council Workforce Plan 2023-28

The strategy and workforce plan set out a strategic and operational direction in terms of how the Council will utilise and develop the workforce to achieve the Councils' vision and priorities in a climate of change and financial uncertainty.

1.2 A monitoring update report for 2021-22 workforce priorities is also included in Appendix C. These priorities were part of the previous Council Workforce Plan 2017-22.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

2.1 Consider and if appropriate, approve the Human Resources Strategy 2023-28 (Appendix A).

2.2 Consider and if appropriate, approve the Council's Workforce Plan 2023-28 (Appendix B).

2.3 Agree that outcomes will be delivered through related plans and strategies such as departmental Delivery and Workforce Plans, the Council's Strategic Equality Plan, Digital Strategy and Office Accommodation Strategy.

- 2.4 Agree that monitoring will be in the form of an annual position statement providing data regarding progress towards meeting the Human Resources Strategy and Council Workforce Plan aims.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The 'Human Resources Strategy 2023-28' and the 'Council Workforce Plan 2023-28' outlines how we will support the Council to deliver its vision and priorities; as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-24, 'Making a Difference'.
- 3.2 Our people, or workforce, play a vital role in delivering our vision, to make Rhondda Cynon Taf a great place to live, work and play. Human Resources strategy and workforce planning is essential to ensure that, through our workforce, we can meet current needs and plan for the future to deliver our best for our communities through our workforce. We need to ensure that we have the leadership, staff resources, skills and capacity to continue to deliver excellent services and meet current and future opportunities and challenges.
- 3.3 The Human Resources Strategy and Council's Workforce Plan has been shaped by the sustainable development principle and embeds the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, to meet national well-being goals and the public services Five Ways of Working.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Our previous Human Resources Strategy and Council Workforce Plan, both 2017-22, are due for renewal. The new, proposed Human Resources Strategy and Workforce Plan builds on previous work, with a focus on maintaining services and performance due to current financial uncertainty.
- 4.2 Renewal of our Human Resources Strategy and Council Workforce Plan is also a recommendation by Wales Audit Office. In their 'Springing Forward – Workforce – Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council' July 2022 report it was identified that the Council:

“Established a solid base for workforce planning when it set out a clear vision and priorities for its workforce within its Human Resources (HR) Strategy 2017-2022”

“The Council also has a clear Workforce Plan 2017-2022...(which) provides clear links with the priorities of the HR Strategy”

It was noted that:

“The Council has a clear vision and effective planning arrangements for its workforce but as it renews its workforce strategy will need to ensure this is fully shaped by the sustainable development principle”

The new Human Resources Strategy and Workforce Plan aims to address this, more information is available throughout this note.

5 OVERVIEW: HUMAN RESOURCE STRATEGY AND COUNCIL WORKFORCE PLAN 2023-28

5.1 The Human Resources Strategy 2023-28 shares the Council's vision for Rhondda Cynon Taf and will work towards delivering the Council's vision and priorities. The Human Resources Strategy consists of three strategic pillars to support the Council to achieve its vision, underpinned by four key aims for action reflected in the Council's Workforce Plan 2023-28. Both documents are available in the appendices.

5.2 Strategic pillars to support the Council's vision and priorities:

1. People and performance.

We need the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time. We want to develop a skilled, high performing, resilient, dedicated, healthy and agile workforce that will deliver the Council's vision and priorities.

2. Organisational environment.

We want to enable an effective and supportive working environment where staff can thrive. We will create and support a culture of working together, sharing of knowledge, innovation and genuine employee and service user involvement.

3. Sustainable and responsible working.

We need to work in a sustainable and responsible way to ensure that current needs are met without compromising future outcomes. Early intervention to prevent problems and ensuring that our workforce is focused on the long-term will be important to achieve this. Partnership and collaboration across and between sectors to tackle the significant issues we are facing at a local, national and global level is also essential.

5.3 Equality, diversity, inclusion and overcoming socioeconomic disadvantage, along with climate change and Welsh language, are

overarching themes embedded within each pillar. Some objectives are more strongly associated with a particular strategic pillar, however in practice, there will be some overlap. Each strategic pillar can provide a perspective or lens to inform workforce decision making and planning.

5.4 The strategy will be delivered through the four key aims of the Council's Workforce Plan:

- (i) Leadership and management development: Responsible, inclusive and sustainable to deliver priorities.
- (ii) High performing, engaged and dedicated workforce.
- (iii) Recruiting and retaining staff for excellent service delivery.
- (iv) Maximising attendance and supporting staff wellbeing.

Objectives for each aim are available in the Council Workforce Plan 2023-28 (Appendix B).

5.5 Outcomes will be delivered through related plans and strategies such as the Council's Strategic Equality Plan, Digital Strategy, Office Accommodation Strategy and departmental Delivery and Workforce Plans. Some Delivery Plans will be more strongly associated with delivery, for example the Human Resources Delivery Plan.

5.6 Monitoring will be in the form of an annual position statement providing data regarding progress towards meeting the Human Resources Strategy and Council Workforce Plan aims. The strategy and workforce plan will also be reviewed and updated as required to ensure relevance in terms of achieving the Council's vision and priorities.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

6.1 An Equality and Socio-economic Impact Assessment has been completed and reviewed by the Impact Assessment Review Panel (and can be viewed if required). Feedback from the Impact Assessment Review Panel was generally positive and highlighted that the inclusion of strategic pillars is a positive step forward in pulling together various policies, there was a good understanding of potential impacts and intersectional thinking, along with good use of research and data.

6.2 At present, no negative impacts have been identified, although there are some impacts which are neutral. This is primarily due to an emphasis on maintaining services and performance due to the Council's current climate of financial uncertainty. The situation will be

reviewed regularly and where possible in the future, improvements and supportive interventions will be put in place. Positive impacts identified were for age, disability, gender reassignment, armed forces community and carers. Neutral impacts were identified for marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, area deprivation, low income/income poverty, low and/or no wealth, material deprivation, socio-economic background, socio-economic disadvantage.

7 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been completed and reviewed by the Impact Assessment Review Panel (and can be viewed if required). Feedback from the Impact Assessment Review Panel was generally positive; Welsh Language Services advised that it was a robust and detailed assessment, which carefully considered how the strategy would impact the Welsh language, how the Council can work to best achieve the aims of local and national policies and aims regarding the Welsh language.
- 7.2 Overall, positive impacts were found for all categories and where appropriate, actions identified to mitigate against potential negative impacts which could happen in the future. The situation will be reviewed regularly and improvements and supportive interventions will be put in place as required.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 There are no financial implications aligned directly to this report. In terms of delivery, focus will be on achieving the best outcomes using existing resources.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 Legal implications will be assessed as required, for example to ensure that work streams comply with legislation. Core legislation is below, although the list is not exhaustive:
- Equality Act (2010)
 - Employment Rights Act (1996)
 - Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)
 - Management of H&S at Work Regulations (1999)
 - Data Protection Act (2018)
 - Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974)
 - Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act (2006)

- Disclosure and Barring Service Code of Practice (2015)

10 CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 10.1 To inform the development of the Human Resources Strategy and Council Workforce Plan, information was gathered from all Council Service Self Evaluations (2022-23), from the Human Resources Senior Management Team and the Council's Senior Leadership Team. Information from our staff consultations was also considered.

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

- 11.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2021-24, 'Making a Difference', takes account of the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the vision, priorities and principles maximise the Council's contribution to the seven national Well-being goals. The proposed Human Resources Strategy and Council Workforce Plan will contribute to and support the delivery of the Council's vision and priorities by aligning strategy and planning to ensure that we have the workforce we need now and in the future. The Five Ways of Working have also been considered.
- 11.2 The strategy and workforce plan align with the sustainable development principle; this is covered in more detail within the Human Resources Strategy and Workforce Plan documents. The pillars of the strategy encourage leaders and managers to view workforce decisions through different perspectives or lenses, for example looking to the long term to ensure that current needs are met without compromising future outcomes, along with early intervention to prevent problems, partnership work and collaboration.

12 STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS (please specify)

- 12.1 There are no specific strategic or relevant wards in respect of this report, although there will be benefits to all wards as the Human Resources Strategy and Council Workforce Plan aims to ensure that we have the workforce needed to deliver the Council's vision and priorities.

13 CONCLUSION

- 13.1 The new Human Resources Strategy and Council Workforce Plan align to the sustainable development principle and set out a strategic direction and key aims for action, to support the Council to achieve its vision and priorities. Focus is on ensuring that the workforce continues to meet both current and future needs, along with maintaining performance and services in a climate of financial uncertainty. The strategic direction and planning will help to ensure that the Council has a workforce that is adaptable and responsive to the changing context of the Council and the needs of our communities.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

[ARTICLE 6 – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE](#)

***Contact Officer –Deb Hughes, Service Director Organisational
Development, Human Resources***

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Appendices:

A	Human Resources Strategy 2023-28	p10
B	Council Workforce Plan 2023-28	p18
C	Previous Council Workforce Plan Monitoring Update: 2021-22	p32

Officer to contact: *Deb Hughes, Service Director Organisational Development, Human Resources*

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL HUMAN RESOURCES
STRATEGY 2023-28**

**Introduction: Achieving the Council's Vision and Priorities
through our Workforce**

The Human Resources (HR) Strategy outlines how we will develop, support and utilise our workforce to support the Council to deliver its vision and priorities; as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-24, 'Making a Difference'. The strategy will ensure that the Council:

- Takes account of organisational context, works collaboratively and creates a sustainable working environment to ensure we look to the long term in addition to meeting current needs.
- Has responsible and inclusive leadership and management to deliver priorities, working sustainably and responsibly to meet current and long term needs whilst meeting challenges and maximising opportunities.
- Recruits and retains the best employees.
- Has a high performing workforce to deliver our priorities. We will continue to strengthen the Council's performance culture, providing rewarding work and development opportunities for staff to enhance outcomes. We will also focus on staff development and well-being for a sustainable approach to performance.

The HR strategy will also ensure that the organisation has expert HR processes, advice and support so that managers and staff are clear about what they need to deliver and for what they are accountable. This will also help to further strengthen the Council's performance culture, as set out in the Council's Performance Management Framework. The Council's HR department will also continue to support departments with workforce issues and demonstrating flexibility to meet needs and ensure the best results for the workforce, whilst demonstrating due diligence and complying with legislative requirements.

The HR Strategy consists of three strategic pillars; 'People and Performance', 'Organisational Environment' and 'Sustainable and Responsible Working',

which are explained in more detail later. Each pillar can provide a useful lens with which to view workforce issues, planning and processes to ensure the Council's vision and priorities are delivered, along with looking to the long-term and taking account of national priorities and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Due to the challenges ahead, which include local and national priorities such as changing demographics, increasing demand for services, diversifying our workforce, the cost of living crisis, advances in technology and issues such as climate change, there is the potential that new workforce knowledge, skills, abilities and processes will be required. There will also be opportunities to further improve and develop our workforce, to enhance performance and service delivery. The HR Strategy will support the workforce to meet challenges and maximise opportunities to strive towards delivering the best results for both now and the future.

The HR Strategy should be read alongside the Council's Workforce Plan 2023-28 and the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-24, 'Making a Difference'.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Wales to consider the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

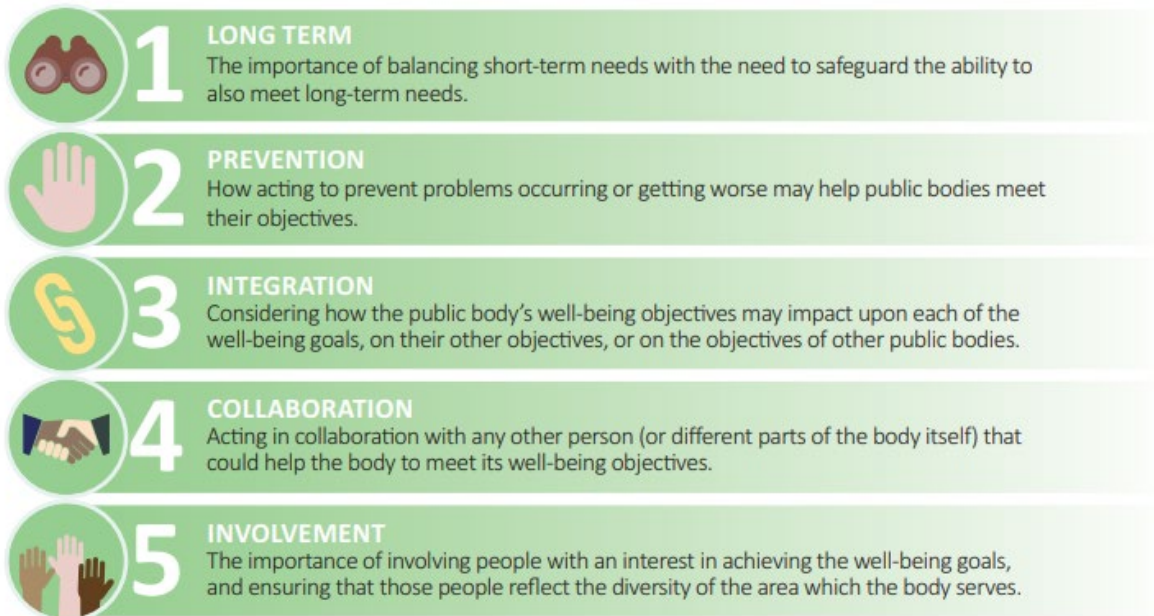
The Act has seven well-being goals which public bodies must work to achieve:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

Sustainable Development is important and is about improving the way that we can achieve goals. The Act defines Sustainable Development in Wales as:

"The process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals."

It sets out Five Ways of Working needed for Public Bodies to achieve the seven well-being goals:



The Council's HR Strategy and Workforce Plan will take into account requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Five Ways of Working.

The Council's Vision and Priorities for Rhondda Cynon Taf

As set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-24, 'Making a Difference', the Council's vision is:

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

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

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

The Plan sets out three priorities which the Council has committed to delivering:

- Ensuring people are independent, healthy and successful.
- Creating places where people are proud to live, work and play.
- Enabling prosperity, creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, be entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper.

To make progress in delivering these priorities and to achieve our vision whilst responding to the significant financial challenges we continue to face, the

Council has set out how we will intend to deliver these priorities in the Corporate Plan. A set of commitments to focus on to deliver these outcomes sits underneath each core priority:

- Live within our means
- Efficient and effective Council
- Maximising opportunities
- Shared responsibility

The Council's Corporate Plan takes account of the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and our vision, priorities and principles continue to maximise the Council's contribution to the seven national Well-being goals. The Priorities in the Corporate Plan also serve as the Council's Well-being Objectives. The national goals, together with the five Ways of Working, will continue to be incorporated into the detailed action plans that will deliver the Council's three priorities.

The Council's HR Strategy and Workforce Plan will complement the Council's Corporate Plan by ensuring that the workforce and our people management and leadership deliver Council priorities, whilst taking account requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, national goals and the Five Ways of Working.

The Council's Human Resources Strategy

The Human Resources Strategy shares the Council's vision for Rhondda Cynon Taf and will work towards delivering the Council's vision and priorities. The HR Strategy consists of three strategic pillars to support the Council to achieve its vision, underpinned by four key themes for action reflected in the Council's Workforce Plan 2023-28.

Equality, diversity, inclusion and overcoming socioeconomic disadvantage, along with climate change and Welsh language, are overarching themes embedded within each pillar. Some objectives are more strongly associated with a particular strategic pillar, however in practice, there will be some overlap.

Each strategic pillar can provide a perspective or lens to inform workforce decision making and planning.

Strategic pillars to support the Council's vision and priorities

1. People and performance

We need the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time. We want to develop a skilled, high performing, resilient, dedicated, healthy and agile workforce that will deliver the Council's vision and priorities.

2. Organisational environment

We want to enable an effective and supportive working environment where staff can thrive. We will create and support a culture of working together, sharing of knowledge, innovation and genuine employee and service user involvement.

3. Sustainable and responsible working

We need to work in a sustainable and responsible way to ensure that current needs are met without compromising future outcomes. Early intervention to prevent problems and ensuring that our workforce is focused on the long-term will be important to achieve this. Partnership and collaboration across and between sectors to tackle the significant issues we are facing at a local, national and global level is also essential.

How we will deliver our strategy

The strategic pillars are underpinned by four key aims or focus points which will be implemented through the Council's Workforce Plan 2023-28:

(i). Leadership and management development: Responsible, inclusive and sustainable to deliver priorities

We recognise that the quality of our leaders and managers, along with the relationship between line managers and teams, is key to our success. We want to further develop leadership and management capacity throughout the Council. We want to strengthen the skills of our leaders and managers, so that they are supported and developed to face the challenges ahead. We want them to have the energy, drive, innovation, creativity and political acumen to lead change, whilst inspiring and supporting our staff to achieve the Council's vision and priorities.

We want their passion for public services to motivate them to work together and to actively contribute to collaborative and partnership work, finding responsible and sustainable solutions to priorities and service delivery. We aim to foster responsible, inclusive and sustainable leadership and management to tackle the big issues facing the world and to ensure that we look to the long term and embrace the sustainable development principle from the Well-being Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Leaders and managers will understand the organisational context and will look to deliver and enhance Corporate, Welsh Government and National Priorities.

(ii). High performing, engaged and dedicated workforce

To deliver the Council's vision and priorities, a high performing engaged and dedicated workforce is needed. We will support and manage staff to achieve their best.

Staff will be aware of how what they deliver contributes to corporate priorities as performance management will be aligned to the Council's vision and priorities. Staff development, coaching and mentoring will be essential; staff with the potential for growth will be identified and developed further. The work environment will also be key for staff to thrive and achieve the best possible outcomes. We want staff to work together and in partnership, contributing to achieving our vision.

(iii). Recruiting and retaining staff for excellent service delivery

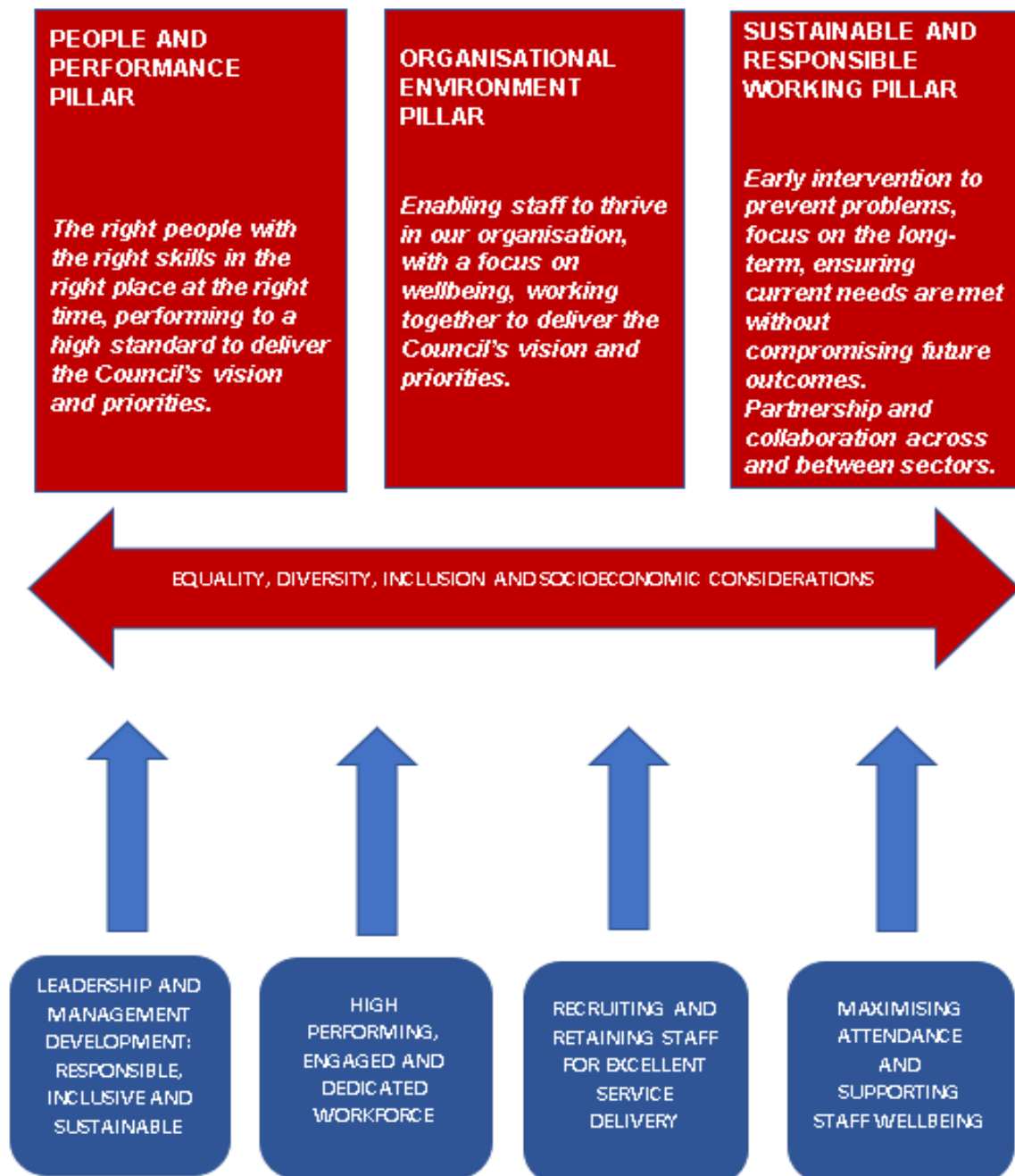
We want to both attract and retain a diverse workforce who have the skills and commitment to deliver the Council's vision and priorities and adapt to changing needs. We want to become an employer of choice and support staff throughout their employment with us to achieve great work outcomes. We recognise the role that the work environment and culture has in achieving this.

(iv). Maximising attendance and supporting staff wellbeing

Maximising attendance and supporting staff well-being is essential for us to achieve our vision and priorities.

We will provide safe working environments within a culture that supports and encourages staff to manage their well-being and health to achieve their best at work, for both now and the long term. We will use mechanisms such as tailored interventions, good management and organisational support, policy and procedure to support staff throughout their employment and to encourage healthy habits and work life balance.

RCT Council HR Strategy: Strategic Pillars and Workforce Plan Aims



Responsibility

The Human Resources Director has overall responsibility for the Human Resources Strategy. However, for it to succeed it needs to be embedded throughout the Council. We will need commitment from all our managers and staff to ensure a strategic workforce approach to deliver the Council's vision and priorities.

How will we know if the strategy is effective?

The implementation of the HR Strategy will be reflected in plans such as the Council's Workforce Plan and key department Delivery Plans such as Human Resources and Information Communication Technology (ICT).

The HR strategy will be monitored through a variety of methods and an annual position statement will be produced. As part of this work, the HR Strategy will be reviewed, to ensure that it is fit for purpose in terms of delivering the Council's vision and priorities. The following will primarily be used for monitoring and review:

- Council Workforce Plan along with monitoring updates and reviews.
- Council's Corporate Plan.
- Human Resources Delivery Plan.
- Council Strategic Equality Plan.
- Council Digital Strategy 2022-26.
- Other relevant business plans and documentation related to the Council's Workforce Plan, for example from departments with relevant actions such as Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Corporate Estates.
- Service Self Evaluations (SSEs).
- Annual Council staff survey, along with other relevant consultation information.
- Other internal and external information relevant to the organisational context and priorities. Some internal information has already been listed, external information can include Welsh Government priorities such as climate change and the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, also documents such as the Future Trends and Well-being of Wales reports, along with industry insights relevant to the workforce.

It is also important to note that some objectives are more strongly associated with a particular strategic pillar within the HR Strategy, however, in practice there will be some overlap. For monitoring purposes, the objective will be tied to the pillar which has the strongest association. For example, performance runs throughout all pillars, however objectives related to individual staff performance reviews will be monitored and reviewed under the 'People and Performance' pillar.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL WORKFORCE PLAN 2023-2028

Introduction

Our people, or workforce, play a vital role in delivering our vision, to make Rhondda Cynon Taf a great place to live, work and play. Good workforce planning is essential to ensure that, through our workforce, we deliver our best for our communities both now and in the future. We need to ensure that we have the staff resources, skills and capacity to continue to maximise opportunities and overcome challenges.

The County Borough has experienced the devastating impacts of Covid and the 2020 floods, and future challenges are ahead such as the cost of living crisis, uncertainty about levels of funding and an increasing demand for our services.

Careful financial planning is key to our success, but alongside this, so are our staff as they deliver our vision and priorities. Our Workforce Plan will help ensure that we plan ahead to make the most of our workforce to achieve the best possible results for the County Borough.

Purpose of the Council's Workforce Plan

The Council's Workforce Plan will support the Council to achieve its priorities, as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-24, 'Making a Difference'. The Workforce Plan will ensure that the Council recruits, retains, develops and supports staff and managers to continue to deliver excellent services and meet current and future opportunities and challenges.

The Council's Workforce Plan also embeds the requirements of the Well-being of Future generations (Wales) Act 2015, to meet national well-being goals and the public services five Ways of Working.

What is Workforce Planning?

Workforce Planning requires an organisation to look at where it is now and where it needs to be in the future. This information is matched with its existing workforce and any known or expected pressures on the supply or replacement of staff through:

- Identifying the link between business strategies and people plans (as we are a Local Authority in Wales we also align with Welsh Government strategies and plans).
- Identification of the future skills and competencies needed to deliver new and improved services.
- Analysis of the present workforce.
- Comparison between present workforce and the requirements of the future and identification of any gaps.
- Strategies to address gaps.
- Setting objectives and actions to realise strategies and workforce planning goals.
- Monitoring, review and evaluation.

Information used to develop the Council's Workforce Plan

The following sources of information have been used to develop the Council's Workforce Plan 2023-28:

- Service Self Evaluation (SSE) documents 2021-22.
- Council workforce data and other relevant sources such as the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-24, 'Making a Difference' and our Tackling Climate Change Strategy 2022-25.
- Council Digital Strategy 2022-26.
- Staff survey and consultation data.
- Welsh Government information such as Future Trends 2021, Wellbeing of Wales 2021, Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and their LGBTQ+ Action Plan, Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers, which has been consulted on (responses currently under review).
- Other relevant external workforce information and insights.

Our Workforce Plan and alignment to the Council's Corporate Plan and Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The aim of the Council's Workforce Plan is to enable the Council to deliver its vision and priorities, as set out in the Council Corporate Plan 2021-24, 'Making a Difference'.

The Council's Workforce Plan focuses on ensuring that the Council's workforce can meet current and future challenges whilst maximising opportunities to achieve the best possible outcomes. To achieve this, it aligns with key strategy such as the Council's Corporate Plan and Human

Resources Strategy. Requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to meet national well-being goals are also embedded in our Workforce Plan.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Wales to consider the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

The Act has seven well-being goals which public bodies must work to achieve:






Well-being goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015



To work towards these, Sustainable Development is important to improve the way that we can achieve goals. The Act defines Sustainable Development in Wales as:

“The process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals.”

It sets out five ways of working needed for Public Bodies to achieve the seven well-being goals which are outlined below:

-  **1 LONG TERM**
The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.
-  **2 PREVENTION**
How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.
-  **3 INTEGRATION**
Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.
-  **4 COLLABORATION**
Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.
-  **5 INVOLVEMENT**
The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

The Council's HR Strategy and Workforce Plan will take into account requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Five Ways of Working.

The Council's Corporate Plan

The Council's Workforce Plan also aligns with the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-24, 'Making a Difference', which outlines our vision and priorities. The Council's vision is:

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

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

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

The Council's Corporate Plan takes account of the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and sets out three priorities which the Council has committed to delivering:

- Ensuring people are independent, healthy and successful
- Creating places where people are proud to live, work and play
- Enabling prosperity, creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, be entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper.

To achieve our vision, the Council has set out how we will intend to deliver these priorities:

- Live within our means
- Efficient and effective Council
- Maximising opportunities
- Shared responsibility

These themes will be reflected in workforce action plans related to the Council's Workforce Plan and HR Strategy.

Opportunities and challenges

The Council faces a number of challenges and opportunities in the present and into the future. Whilst current issues can be identified, it can be difficult to predict what lies ahead, although there are reports and information available that can help us to focus on what we may need to be working towards to help with workforce planning. Looking at what we need to currently address, as well as what we may need to overcome moving forward, helps us to plan and have the best chance possible of maximising opportunities and overcoming challenges to deliver the best services for the long term.

Some key challenges and opportunities which have been identified include:

- Increasing demand for services, which can be driven by a changing population. Rhondda Cynon Taf, like many areas, is facing a growth in older cohorts which adds demand to health and social care sectors. This demographic is also reflected in our workforce as people have extended working lives. This may result in a need for more flexibility in terms of working patterns, adjustments and career pathways. We also want our workforce to reflect the number of Welsh speakers in our communities and create opportunities to realise this in line with the aims of the Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers Strategy.
- There are also socioeconomic challenges which our residents and staff are facing. For example, the cost of living is increasing and we may

need to consider the impact of this on the workforce and look to support staff, for example around financial well-being.

- We also want to support staff to reduce sickness absence and maximise attendance. As part of this, it is important to support staff throughout the challenges they may be facing, for example caring responsibilities and working for longer to support their retirement. We want to encourage a work life balance and good well-being so that work performance can be optimised and sustained for the long-term.
- There is a greater focus on advancing diversity, equality and inclusion in society and this is reflected in Welsh Government plans such the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and reports which highlight issues such as poverty and health in Wales. We want to be proactive in our approach to tackle these important issues and this will be reflected in our workforce planning.
- Many organisations are facing challenges around recruitment, retention and skills gaps. Due to the diversity of services that the Council provides, we can experience skills gaps in certain sectors or in some technical skills we require. There can also be shortages of qualified candidates in the local labour market and we sometimes find that our grading system is not as competitive as other sectors in terms of salary, which can add to recruitment challenges. However, we do offer employees great support in terms of wellbeing, development opportunities and family friendly policies which can help with recruitment attraction and staff retention. There can also be increases in demand for services and a requirement for more staff to deliver services, for example a greater need for health and social care services and winter pressures. Therefore, we will look at improving our recruitment processes and provide opportunities to develop staff ourselves so that we have the right people with the right skills for service delivery. Retention of staff is also important to ensure continuity of service delivery. Part of this is creating and sustaining working environments for staff to thrive and good working patterns such as further developing hybrid working.
- Due to the diversity of our services and recruitment challenges we are facing in specific service areas, we will continue to offer bespoke support and interventions as required to ensure that we continue to recruit and retain the best staff to meet the ever increasing demands upon our key Council services. We will also continue with more inclusive approaches to Council wide recruitment initiatives. For example, in terms of supporting the armed forces community there are

a range of supportive measures, in particular our guaranteed job interview scheme for service leavers, veterans and reservists who have demonstrated that they fulfil all essential criteria for the job they have applied for. Also, as an employer we are undertaking work around neurodiversity in the workforce and we are currently working towards becoming an Autism Aware certified organisation. The Human Resources and Digital Improvement Teams are already certified as Autism Aware and we are looking to rollout training to the whole Authority.

- Partnership work is becoming increasingly important to tackle the complex and multi-faceted challenges facing our communities and core services. This includes working with the police and health service for example, but also the emerging relationship we have with our communities where we work together for both residents and businesses to take a shared responsibility for themselves and the communities they live in.
- There are significant advances in digital technology and data management and it is important to exploit these transformational opportunities for positive impacts for residents, staff and service delivery.
- Leadership and management will be key to meeting challenges and maximising opportunities. We will support and develop our leaders and managers so that they can deliver the Council's vision and priorities.
- Like all Councils, we are continuing to face a difficult financial challenge as more people need our services. As there is uncertainty about the levels of funding in the future, we need to make decisions about where to prioritise and spend resources. We will be considered and innovative in our approach to design alternative and more efficient ways of working, to ensure high standards of service delivery are maintained.
- There are other significant challenges to consider. The war in Ukraine is a humanitarian crisis and is contributing to economic and political uncertainty. The economic impact of Brexit along with workforce, supply and distribution issues. Future waves of Covid could also impact us, for example, the economic impact and increased demand for our services. There is also the potential of labour shortages and supply and chain issues.

- There is also the challenge of climate change and the Council has committed to becoming a net-zero Green House Gas Council by 2030. The work around climate change will require changes to be made by both staff and residents.
- We also have a good working relationship with our trade union colleagues who help advance the interests of their members in the workplace. We have worked with trade unions around issues such as negotiating agreements on terms and conditions, change and the impact on staff, also member concerns on a more individual level. This relationship is important in realising our ambitions for the workforce and ensuring excellent service delivery. Staff are made aware of the benefits of membership at induction.

The Current Workforce

The Council provides important local services and facilities for residents. These include providing education services and schools, waste and recycling, leisure and recreation facilities including parks, highway maintenance, local planning, libraries, social services and environmental health.

We have a range of employment contracts including fulltime, part-time, term time and casual. Some staff have more than one contract. Agency workers and consultants are used only when necessary, to ensure service delivery or to buy in expertise for project delivery. We also have services delivered through partnerships or commissioning arrangements.

We are also a main employer for the local area and 80% of our staff live in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Rhondda Cynon Taf is situated to the north of Cardiff, at the heart of South Wales. It consists of five valleys, the Rhondda Fawr and Fach, Cynon, Taf and Ely, some areas of which have high concentrations of multiple deprivation.

The figures below give an overview of staff composition (including schools) for 2021/22:

- Headcount of 9957 employees with a total FTE of 8042 (excluding casual contracts and seasonal positions).
- 45% of our staff are employed in schools.
- 75% of staff are female and 25% are male.
- 46% of staff are part-time.
- Most staff are aged between the ages of 35-54 (54%).
- 529 of our posts are partly or wholly grant funded.
- There were 1010 leavers and 988 starters.

- In 2020-21, 15% of staff are fluent Welsh speakers, a slight increase over the last few years (figures could not be obtained for 2021-22).
- 2.8% of staff disclosed that they had a disability, however staff equality data return rates for this question were low so this figure may be an underestimate.
- Staff from minority groups make up 0.8% of the workforce, but again information return rates were low so this figure may not be a true reflection of the workforce. Job applications from ethnic groups are also increasing, from 2.5 in 2016 to 6% of all applications in 2021-22, this data was more reliable as information return rates for equalities information were high.

The workforce we need: Workforce Plan delivery aims

To ensure that we have the workforce we need into the future, the Council's Workforce Plan aims to set out four delivery aims that will apply across the workforce. This plan, however, does not replace local workforce plans that are in place to address specific service needs.

The four delivery aims are:

1. Responsible, inclusive and sustainable leadership and management to deliver priorities

We recognise that the quality of our leaders and managers, along with the relationship between line managers and teams, is key to our success. We want to further develop leadership and management capacity throughout the Council. We want to strengthen the skills of our leaders and managers, so that they are supported and developed to face the challenges ahead. We want them to have the energy, drive, innovation, creativity and political acumen to lead change, whilst inspiring and supporting our staff to achieve the Council's vision and priorities.

We want their passion for public services to motivate them to work together and to actively contribute to collaborative and partnership work, finding responsible and sustainable solutions to priorities and service delivery.

We aim to foster responsible, inclusive and sustainable leadership and management to tackle the big issues facing the world and to ensure that we look to the long term and embrace the sustainable development principle from the Well-being Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Leaders and managers will understand the organisational context and will look to deliver and enhance Corporate, Welsh Government and National Priorities.

Objectives:

The Council will continue to utilise and embed current mechanisms for communicating with, and developing leadership and management skills which include:-

Managers Briefings, Global Communications, Coaching and Mentoring Programmes, Accredited and non-accredited leadership and management programmes, improvement hours.

The Council will adapt its leadership and management programmes to deliver more flexible modular programmes with a focus on the concepts of responsible leadership. We will look to the long term and view challenges through a variety of lenses, (to include for example, Diversity and Inclusion, wellbeing, Welsh language and climate change) to increase diversity and look to resolve problems early through early intervention.

The Council will continue to support its leaders and managers to embed and normalise the Welsh language within their service areas.

2. High performing, engaged and dedicated workforce

To deliver the Council's vision and priorities, a high performing engaged and dedicated workforce is needed. We will support and manage staff to achieve their best.

Staff will be aware of how what they deliver contributes to corporate priorities as performance management will be aligned to the Council's vision and priorities. Staff development, coaching and mentoring will be essential; staff with the potential for growth will be identified and developed further.

The work environment will also be key for staff to thrive and achieve the best possible outcomes. We want staff to work together and in partnership, contributing to achieving our vision.

Objectives:

The Council will continue to support staff learning and development through existing mechanisms including, corporate induction, e-learning, improvement hours, service and role specific training and mandatory learning programmes.

To continue with the new standard staff consultation to allow for comparative data to be generated to review changes in staff views over time and identify areas for improvements. Supplementary pulse questionnaires will be used to gather staff views on topical themes as required.

We will foster a working environment where staff feel safe and can thrive to perform at their best, free from discrimination and harassment. To support this, we will raise awareness of existing mechanisms and monitor success. This includes our Dignity at Work and Grievance processes, along with well-being and staff network peer support.

To rollout the new corporate individual performance reviews to improve performance by ensuring that staff have feedback and support to enhance or maintain their overall performance.

The Council will look to augment learning and development opportunities for staff through accessing funded learning streams (for example through national programmes such as apprenticeship frameworks and personal learning accounts) in partnership with further and higher education partners

The Council will explore methods of enhancing internal staff communication digitally via systems such as iTrent, together with focussing on new methods of communicating key messages via social media platforms such as Facebook

We will continue to review and amend our policies and procedures to ensure that they meet legislative and organisational requirements and support staff well-being.

The Council will continue to invest in the development of its Members' and workforce, providing opportunities to increase their digital skills and literacy, enabling people to become more digitally confident. The Council's Digital Service will continue with its approach for digital support that includes staff induction, bitesize development sessions and tailored support to assist the adoption of new digital solutions, so that we can make the most of the opportunities that digital brings.

We will leverage our information to gain useful actionable insight from our rich data sources, ensuring that our workforce decision making is informed from robust data analysis and using data driven approaches.

The Council will continue to support its Welsh speaking staff, providing all the necessary tools for them to thrive and develop in their language of choice.

3. Recruiting and retaining staff for excellent service delivery

We want to both attract and retain a diverse workforce who have the skills and commitment to deliver the Council's vision and priorities and adapt to changing needs. We want to become an employer of choice and support staff

throughout their employment with us to achieve great work outcomes. We recognise the role that the work environment and culture have in achieving this.

Objectives:

To continue to develop our employer brand and increase our social media and online presence to attract the right people to work for us.

To continue to work with departments to support with recruitment and retention and use tailored interventions where appropriate to meet needs.

To continue with our Graduate and Apprenticeship schemes to recruit to skills gaps and look to the longer-term needs of the organisation.

To continue to grow and develop our employability programmes; Access to Employment, Gateway to Employment and Care2Work, to support those furthest from the jobs market to experience real work opportunities within the Council. This includes supporting individuals with learning and physical disabilities and our Children Looked After.

To identify mechanisms through which the recruitment, selection and on-boarding of staff, particularly in hard to fill roles, can be expedited.

The Council will continue to challenge and strengthen its procedures regarding the recruitment, retention and training of Welsh speaking staff in order to support the relevant aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and any resulting national and local strategies.

4. Maximising attendance and supporting staff wellbeing

Maximising attendance and supporting staff well-being is essential for us to achieve our vision and priorities.

We will provide safe working environments within a culture that supports and encourages staff to manage their well-being and health to achieve their best at work, for both now and the long term. We will use mechanisms such as tailored interventions, good management and organisational support, policy and procedure to support staff throughout their employment and to encourage healthy habits and work life balance.

Objectives:

To finalise and implement the Council's 'Office Accommodation Strategy Workspace Plan: Fit for the Future' and continue to review hybrid working arrangements to ensure our workforce have the right digital tools for their role, that performance is maintained, and to safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of staff.

Develop and implement a Well-being Strategy that supports a healthier and more resilient RCT Council workforce. Focus will be on mental, physical, social and financial well-being and take account of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. We want well-being to be integral to everything we do.

Continue with Occupational Health and Well-being Unit support and tailored interventions with a focus on reducing sickness absence. We aim to provide impactful support in line with our workforce profile and tailored to what people need.

In addition, Employee Relations will continue to work with and support services to manage absence. This includes the provision of up-to-date information and specialist advice to assist with resolution rates.

Responsibility

To ensure that we realise our ambitions to provide the best service to residents and the public sector both now and in the future, the Rhondda Cynon Taf Workforce Plan needs to be embedded throughout the organisation. It is recognised that departments will have their own specific workforce plans in place to meet their needs, however all plans will align to the Council's overarching Workforce Plan to ensure we have a cohesive approach to workforce issues to achieve our vision and priorities.

Council Workforce Plan Delivery and Monitoring

The Council Workforce Plan will be delivered through related plans and strategies such as the Council's Strategic Equality Plan, Digital Strategy, Office Accommodation Strategy and departmental Delivery and Workforce Plans. Some Delivery Plans will be more strongly associated with delivery, for example the Human Resources Delivery Plan.

Monitoring will be in the form of an annual position statement providing data regarding progress towards meeting Council Workforce Plan aims. In addition, the Workforce Plan aims will be reviewed and updated as required to ensure

that they continue to be relevant in terms of achieving the Council's vision and priorities.

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL WORKFORCE PLAN MONITORING UPDATE:
2021-22**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This note is relevant to the previous Council Workforce Plan 2017-22 and reports on progress towards meeting priority actions for 2021-22 following the interim monitoring report from 2020. The new Council Workforce Plan 2023-28 takes forward future priority workforce actions.
- 1.2 An overview of the Council Workforce Plan 2017-22 is not presented as an interim, pre-COVID update was presented to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in 2020. Due to the pandemic, it was decided that moving forward new priorities were to be set, relevant to operating within a COVID environment, along with continuing progress with relevant previously set actions.

2 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- 2.1 Over the last couple of years, Human Resources has focused its resources on supporting managers, Headteachers and staff throughout the pandemic, dealing with constant change at a national and local level within their services. This has resulted in actions such as redeploying staff, recruiting and resourcing new services such as Track, Trace, Protect; supporting the co-ordination and delivery of COVID testing and the vaccine programme, putting in place shielding arrangements for 'at risk' staff and facilitating risk assessments for staff to return to work safely along with supporting their well-being. The new HR/Payroll system iTrent was also being implemented parallel to this activity.
- 2.2 Other key areas have also supported the aims of the Council's Workforce Plan 2017-22, for example ICT and Corporate Estates, in terms of accelerating hybrid working by providing staff with IT equipment to enable working from home, more agile working and mapping out a way forward in terms of the future of office accommodation. Much of this work was accelerated due to the pandemic. A hybrid working policy has been produced and a Council Office Accommodation Strategy is being finalised.
- 2.3 The detailed monitoring of the Workforce Plan for 2021-22 is available on request. Further to this, highlights against Workforce Plan aims for 2021-22 are listed below, most of which is an excerpt from the HR Corporate Assessment and may include detail not covered in the detailed monitoring of planned objectives set in 2020. This is due to

changing priorities and work streams developed to meet changing needs during COVID and emerging from the pandemic:

2.4 Workforce Plan Aim 1: Developing a flexible and agile workforce that shares organisational knowledge

- Accelerated by the need to respond to the COVID pandemic, Agile and Hybrid models of working are now business as usual. The detailed implications of a safe, flexible and technologically supported return to offices together with arrangements and policies for flexible working are continually reviewed and are informed by staff surveys.
- Ensured a safe return to offices for staff, complying with changing COVID regulations.
- Reintroduced formal Flexible Working arrangements in April 2022.
- Held one Cabinet/Officer planning briefing virtually during 2021/22 and a face-to-face session held in 2022. The programme was affected by intermittent COVID restrictions but is now running as usual.
- A hybrid working policy has been produced and a Council Office Accommodation Strategy is being finalised.
- Continued staff communication via staff surveys, global emails and RCT Source/INFORM.

2.5 Workforce Plan Aim 2: Recruiting and retaining the best talent to create a diverse workforce

- A review of recruitment processes is being considered to complement the iTrent Recruitment functionality.
- Launched a dedicated recruitment web presence.
- Increased the use of Social Media platforms as a recruitment attraction method for hard to recruit and priority posts e.g. Social Care, Facilities cleaning, Mechanics, Graduates and Apprentices.
- Introduced the Educators Wales platform for the Education sector, enabling schools and education to advertise vacancies on a Wales wide job portal, free of charge.
- Children's Services implemented a Social Worker recruitment campaign which led to the appointment of 20 new Social Work staff. Recruitment campaigns are now being developed and implemented for hard to fill priority posts.
- Introduced a new short application form to widen the recruitment of Supported Living and Residential Services staff.
- Held Career Fairs in:

- February 2021, with 942 attendees. 30 plus employers featured over 600 job vacancies including Apprenticeships and Graduate opportunities.
- September 2021 with 468 attendees. 30 plus employers featured over 1,000 job vacancies including Apprenticeship and Graduate opportunities.
- Human Resources and Communities4 Work worked with DWP to support a pool of harder to reach applicants and delivered a number of workshops to assist individuals apply for the Apprenticeship and Graduate opportunities.
- Continued to build organisation capacity through targeted recruitment of Graduates and Apprenticeships throughout the pandemic, with 30 Apprentices and 26 Graduates appointed during 2021/22. 45 Apprentices and 20 Graduates have been recruited so far in 2022 and the next Graduate recruitment campaign will take place in December 2022 and Apprenticeships in early 2023.
- In June 2021 the Council was awarded Macro Employer of the Year at the Apprenticeships Awards Cymru 2021, the Princess Royal Training Award in 2022 in recognition of its commitment to training and the positive impact that developing staff has on the local authority and was a finalist for the Public Sector Award in the Pink News Awards 2022.
- Continued to deliver, virtually, the mandatory Induction Programme introduced in September 2019 for all new staff. The content and delivery has been continually reviewed to ensure that it remains both accessible and fit for purpose given the changing circumstances. A revised format was introduced in March 2022, from which feedback was positive compared to previous events and further reviews are scheduled.
- Secured additional funding to extend a further 3 opportunities per year for Children Looked After on the 'Step in the Right Direction' programme.
- Continued to work with Coleg Y Cymoedd and Elite Training to provide 10 supported placements a year through the 'Gateway to Employment' programme, offering opportunities to 10 young people with Additional Needs to gain valuable work experience with a view to securing paid work.
- Worked with University of South Wales to provide internships across the Council.
- Continued to support the Gatsby Benchmarks in RCT schools, promote the Council as an employer, particularly in relation to Apprenticeship programmes.
- Supported the roll out of the Welsh Government funded 'Kickstart' scheme, providing 20 placements within various service areas across the Council for individuals aged 16 – 25.
- We have continued to implement the actions from the RCT Council Welsh Language Skills Framework to maintain an overview of Welsh Language

skills, needs and resources with a view to recruiting and training staff in order to meet these objectives.

2.6 Workforce Plan Aim 3: Leadership and management development

- Continued to deliver our Leadership Development programmes Mercury; Transform and ILM programmes through virtual platforms to the appropriate levels of management. Face to face training has also been facilitated where necessary/appropriate.
- Introduced further aspects of leadership development in the Council's Leadership Series. These have focussed on 'Leading during the Pandemic and Beyond' and a series of 'Women into Leadership' programmes. These events were also recorded and made available on RCT Source.
- Worked with the training provider ALS to introduce funded mentoring training.
- Developed a new approach to Individual Performance Reviews (IPRs) scheduled for implementation in April 2023. This process will be made available for managers/staff through iTrent and will align with the organisational performance arrangements and Delivery Plans. Explanatory guidance, workshops, e-learning opportunities and staff and manager communications are being developed to accompany the implementation. iTrent will also provide relevant compliance monitoring functionality.

2.7 Workforce Plan Aim 4: Enabling a high performing, engaged and committed workforce

- The development of our new approach to IPRs set out above will contribute to a high performing, engaged and committed workforce.
- We have continued to put in place a range of Staff Benefits, described in more detail below.
- Our Staff Engagement approach has sought and responded well to staff views e.g., around hybrid working and the reintroduction of refreshed 'flexi' arrangements which better met the needs of the organisation and staff.
- The Council is exploring how we can rethink community engagement and how to use this evidence in decision making.
- We have signed BITC's Race at Work Charter.
- Our staff networks have continued throughout the pandemic.
- Various working groups have been set up to address specific issues, which include the Cost of Living Working Group, Hybrid and Flexi working group, Sexual Harassment Working Group, Social Services Workforce Planning Group.

- We are undertaking work around neurodiversity in the workforce and are currently working towards becoming an Autism Aware certified organisation. The Human Resources and Digital Improvement Teams are already certified as Autism Aware and we are looking to rollout training to the whole Authority.
- Continued to refresh the Compendium of training opportunities accessible through INFORM and RCT Source and staff. Latest update was published in September 2021.

2.8 Workforce Plan Aim 5: Supporting health and wellbeing to maximise attendance.

To keep people well we:

- Implemented a staff wellbeing helpline-providing access to COVID testing for key workers and their families, self-referrals to wellbeing assessment and physiotherapy, and a listening ear.
- RCT supported and worked with Cwm Taf Morgannwg in providing staff and its external partnerships with COVID testing and vaccinations. The Council provided venues, staff and booking systems amongst other support, along with supporting the governance and protocols development. In Summer of 2022 the Council provided staff validation data for RCT Staff and our private partners in health and social care for the COVID Vaccine booster campaign.
- In order to manage the risk of individuals throughout the pandemic we introduced this specific risk assessment which was updated regularly in line with guidance. A task group was set up to manage the updates and communications. COVID has now been included in the general risk assessment process for managers to complete.
- Put in place Staff Wellbeing Assessment guides that allows staff to look at their self-care and how the organisation can support them.
- Introduced 'Wellbeing with Cari', an Artificial Intelligence tool that enables staff to self-assess their wellbeing confidentially and access to support in line with their scoring. 1,000 staff have accessed Cari.
- Put in place a range of 'Bitesize' wellbeing sessions, informed by themes emerging from staff engagement with 'Cari'. These included 'Sleep' and 'Menopause Café'.
- Delivered the annual influenza vaccine to 1,200 staff and supporting national campaigns e.g. blood pressure, mental health etc.
- Secured funding for and implemented counselling service for school staff, both in and absent from work owing to sickness. 199 staff supported in 847 appointments between August 21 and March 2022, with high levels of positive feedback.
- Resumed Absence Management arrangements held in abeyance during the pandemic.

- An employee assistance programme, Care First, was introduced in June 2022 and is available to all staff. It provides staff access to 24/7/365 in the moment support. Staff can access an advice centre, online CBT, an app, webinars, health website etc.

3 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY AND WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The update includes information around specific equality and diversity and Welsh language objectives.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications aligned directly to this report. In terms of future delivery, focus will be on achieving the best outcomes using existing resources.

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 There are no consultation implications associated with this report.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 6.1 Legal implications will be assessed as required, for example to ensure that work streams are legally compliant. Core legislation is below, although the list is not exhaustive:

- Equality Act (2010)
- Employment Rights Act (1996)
- Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)
- Management of H&S at Work Regulations (1999)
- Data Protection Act (2018)
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974)
- Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act (2006)
- Disclosure and Barring Service Code of Practice (2015)

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

- 7.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2021-24, 'Making a Difference', takes account of the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the vision, priorities and principles maximise the Council's contribution to the seven national Well-being goals. The aim of the Council Workforce Plan 2017-22 was to contribute to and

support the delivery of the Council's vision and priorities to ensure that we have the workforce we need now and in the future.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The 2021-22 priority workforce plan updates relevant to pandemic working conditions have been presented, marking the end of the reporting of the 2017-22 Council Workforce Plan. An overview of the Council Workforce Plan 2017-22 was not presented as an interim, pre-COVID report was previously made available to SLT in 2020 to update on actions pre-pandemic. Due to COVID it was previously agreed that only relevant actions would be carried forward and new actions for 2021-22 were set, relevant to the pandemic working conditions. Moving forward, there will be annual updates for the new Council Workforce Plan 2023-28.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23rd JANUARY 2023

WASTE SERVICES – REVISED WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – FRONTLINE SERVICES, IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE, (CLLR A CRIMMINGS), AND THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (CLLR A MORGAN)

Author: Roger Waters, Director – Frontline Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:

- (i) Provide feedback from the 5-week public consultation period during December 2022 – January 2023 with respect to proposed revisions to the Council’s operational waste management processes regarding future arrangements for the collection of refuse and recycling designed to aid an increase in the rate of recycling across RCT, whilst also offering financial efficiencies and to help inform a Cabinet decision on the way forward.
- (ii) Seek Cabinet’s approval to introduce and implement the options for change as presented in the report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet notes the content of the report and duly resolves to approve the introduction of the following revisions to the Council’s Waste Management Strategy:

- (i) The collection of residual household waste on a 3-weekly basis for all domestic waste collections.
- (ii) The 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) The “no side waste” rule continues for those households with large 240L wheelie bin collections, (but 1 bag of side

waste, no larger than 70L, is allowed for the standard 120L bins).

- (iii) The initiation of a trial of the use of reusable recycling sacks for the collection of dry mixed recycling, (DMR).

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council's Corporate Plan, ***Making A Difference (2020 - 2024)*** sets out the Council's commitments to Keeping RCT clean through efficient street cleaning services, minimising the amount of waste we send to landfill, achieving our recycling targets through weekly recycling and regular refuse collections, and reducing our carbon footprint.
- 3.2 Additionally, the Welsh Government's strategy to make the circular economy in Wales a reality, ***Beyond Recycling***, stipulates the next minimum target for the recycling of household waste is 70% by 2025, as we look to maintain our trajectory towards zero waste nation by 2050.
- 3.3 Further, Council strategy; ***Making Rhondda Cynon Taf Carbon Neutral by 2030***, commits the Council to ensuring it recycles or reuses 80% of all municipal waste by 2025 by supporting residents and businesses on initiatives that promote waste minimisation and reuse of materials, as well as investing in technology to increase the amount of waste we recycle and reuse locally.
- 3.4 All Welsh Local Authorities work towards recycling targets set by Welsh Government and, as noted above, the next milestone target is for 2025 where 70% of waste collected must be recyclable. (Failure to reach these targets will result in the Council being issued with heavy financial penalties).

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 RCT currently collects residual household waste fortnightly, (with Commercial waste collections taking place weekly apart from customers from RCT Primary Schools, who have fortnightly collections). Recent analysis of the Council's recycling rate showed that it is currently at 67.48%.
- 4.2 The current situation sees domestic waste in the Rhondda collected via black bags with the Cynon and Taf having collections via wheelie bins.
- 4.3 There are currently 13 Councils which collect household waste on a fortnightly basis, with an average recycling rate of 66.27%.
- 4.4 Additionally, there are currently 6 Councils which collect waste on a 3-weekly basis, with an average recycling rate of 66.79% and several others currently in the process, (at different stages), of introducing such

changes, meaning that a majority total of 14 Councils in Wales have either adopted, or are shortly to adopt, 3-weekly refuse collections.

- 4.5. Finally, 1 Council collects waste on a weekly basis, with a recycling rate of 63.02% and 1 Council collects waste on a 4-weekly basis with a recycling rate of 70.51%.
- 4.6 Of all 22 Councils in Wales, those with the highest recycling rates, (i.e. those with current rates in excess of 70%, namely: Bridgend CBC, Pembrokeshire CC, The Vale of Glamorgan CBC, Conwy CBC and Monmouthshire CC), all have strict volume controls on the amount of waste they collect, regardless of collection frequency. (Please see Appendix 1 – All Wales Refuse and Recycling Collection Models (2021/22) – for further information).

5. THE MOVE TO 3-WEEKLY REFUSE COLLECTIONS ACROSS RCT

- 5.1 When undertaking a study to model the potential impact of changing collection frequency, food waste yield data was used to create a baseline; it is seen as a good indicator for other streams of recycling.
- 5.2 Based on recent data, and noting comparisons with other Welsh Councils, there would appear to be no substantial evidence to suggest that there would be a significant increase in food waste yield per household resulting from a move to 3-weekly waste collections on their own, in isolation. However, there is good evidence to suggest that accompanied with strong volume control measures such as limiting the amount of general waste that can be presented, (i.e. a maximum of 3 black bags per household, per collection or no side waste for those with large wheelie bin collections), then a move to 3-weekly collections would be beneficial.
- 5.3 It is estimated that by adopting this approach across RCT, it could lead to as much as a 20% increase, which would result in an additional food waste yield per household generating around 2,600 Tonnes per annum additional recycling.
- 5.4 Achieving additional food waste recycling of circa 2,600T per year, would enable estimated processing cost savings of up to £350k in a full year.
- 5.5 When applying these assumptions to 2021 data, the projected additional 2,600 Tonne increase would have equated a 1.9% increase in the Council's overall recycling rate, (increasing from 67.48% to 69.38%). Furthermore, it is anticipated that there will also be an uplift in the dry recycling to add to this, but this is difficult to reliably quantify at this time.
- 5.6 Moving to 3-weekly collections will also lead to a reduction in refuse collection rounds, which is likely to have an impact on the current staffing model of Waste Services. However, any reductions to the staffing model will be managed through our agreed employment procedures and a realignment of resources, including Agency staff levels.

- 5.7 Further, it is envisaged that a move to 3-weekly collections will also result in a reduction in the Council's carbon footprint. The Service currently utilises 60 Refuse Collection Vehicles, (RCVs), to undertake waste and recycling collection rounds and it is estimated that as many as 4 of these vehicles could be saved, (and removed from the Council's Fleet).
- 5.8 Based on removing two 26t vehicles and two 22t vehicles, estimated vehicle running cost savings would be £80k in a full year, (noting that a reduction in vehicle replacement capital expenditure will also be realised over the medium term).
- 5.9 A recent report from the Carbon Trust identified the Council's fleet contributing 7% of the Council's baseline carbon footprint. As part of the proposed service change, the removal of four RCVs, with annual journeys totalling more than 32k miles, would equate to saving of approximately 100TCO_{2e} per year. This can be seen as part of a phased approach to give the Council options and flexibility going forward to help ensure its Carbon Footprint is lowered and zero emissions targets are met in line with wider strategies and local plans.
- 5.10 Allowing for the undertaking of the necessary preparatory works to enable the introduction of the proposed revision to the Council's refuse collection schedules, it is viewed as practicable to roll-out 3-weekly refuse collections, across RCT, from June 2023.

6. THE TRIAL OF REUSEABLE RECYCLING SACKS

- 6.1 The Council currently issues single-use clear plastic bags to residents for the purpose of presenting their dry mixed recycling at the kerbside.
- 6.2 Records show that the Council purchased 30.2 million single use bags during 2021/22, at a cost of £877k (£867k full year estimated cost for 2022/23).
- 6.3 In November 2021 the Council issued reusable sacks for green waste collection as a replacement for the single use plastic bags. Implemented successfully, it also led to saving on the use of 3 million single-use recycling bags and it is considered that a switch to reusable bags for the collection of dry mixed recycling would result in an even higher number of single-use bags no longer being required.
- 6.4 An initial assessment of the potential to move to using reusable sacks has been undertaken and is included within the original Cabinet Report included at Appendix 3.
- 6.5 Officers have carried out an initial technical assessment of the potential switch to reusable bags for kerbside recycling. Trials have taken place at Bryn Pica using the Council's existing reusable bags, as well as other sample bags provided by the same supplier, (many of which are in use by other Councils for the collection of domestic tin and plastic waste). The

trials were limited to general observations regarding volume, weight, contamination and manual handling.

- 6.6 There are many examples of Waste Collection Authorities within the UK using reusable sacks for the collection of recyclable materials. Reusable bags can be considered to be a more sustainable option than single-use plastic bags, although further investigations into their service life would need to be undertaken to more accurately quantify annual cost savings, as it is envisaged that replacement reusable sacks would be required after a few years.
- 6.7 However, there is no evidence to suggest that a change to reusable sacks will increase the Council's overall recycling performance or act as a barrier to further improvements. Hence the need for piloting this initiative to fully understand the potential impacts.
- 6.8 Based on a scenario of re-useable sacks for recycling being implemented, this would also enable budget savings to be realised as part of the current bag distribution arrangements.
- 6.9 Trials in designated areas across all 3 areas of RCT, to commence later in 2023 and last for 6 months, will allow the service to assess the operational impact, recycling volumes and quality of recycling produced. It would also enable further public engagement to obtain feedback and observations from service users which would be used to inform the potential for wider roll-out incorporating any amendments arising from lessons learned in the trials. Baseline data will be gathered for the selected trial sites so that the changes can be accurately captured.

7. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 7.1 Under the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010, Local Authorities are required to have due regard to the need to:
1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination.
 2. Advance equality of opportunity.
 3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 7.2 An Equality Impact Assessment was prepared and has been reviewed and updated to include further mitigated risks following the public consultation period. The Equality Impact Assessment (including socio-economic duty) is included as Appendix 5.
- 7.3 There are 5 negative and 12 neutral equality and diversity implications associated with this report. The negative impacts relate to the protected characteristics of Age, Disability and Sex, plus socio-economic background and socio-economic disadvantage. These impacts will be mitigated by a range of actions as detailed in the impact assessment.

7.4 The Council is committed to meeting the requirements of the Equality Act and in doing so contributing to the national Well-being goal of a more equal Wales, required by the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

8. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no Welsh language implications as a result of the recommendations in this report. However, although the recommendations with regards to service changes in relation to the collection of waste do not have any direct impact on the Welsh language, opportunities for the service to maintain, grow or upskill Welsh speaking staff will remain a priority. The Welsh Language Impact Assessment is included as Appendix 6.

9. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

9.1 The “Let’s Talk Waste” public consultation was conducted in-house and ran from the 5th December 2022 until the 9th January 2023.

9.2 As part of the consultation, people were asked if they would support a change in black bag/wheelie bin collection frequency if it safeguarded other key services. The 4087 responses received to this question were fairly balanced, with a slight majority of respondents supporting the proposed change, if it safeguarded other key services (50.4%).

9.3 People were also asked if they would support a change to a reusable recycling sack and if the household would be able to store and use reusable sacks. Some 4097 responses were received to this with the majority, (62.2%), supportive of such a change.

9.4 A detailed report collating all questions asked and feedback from the public consultation into the options for change can be found as Appendix 2 to this report, (Let’s Talk Waste Consultation Report).

9.5 With specific regard to the option for change set out in Section 5, there are a number of themes, which have emerged from the recent public consultation. Broadly, these are views relating to:

- Existing wheelie-bins not being sufficient in size to store waste for up to 3 weeks.
- The potential for increased fly-tipping due to longer waits between collections.
- Concerns over possible increases in vermin due to the smell and hygiene issues if waste is left for 3 weeks.
- Queries around the storage and disposal of hutch waste and cat litter.
- The collection of clinical waste.

- Feedback that the moving to 3-weekly refuse collections represented a reduction in service, which should mean reduced Council tax.

9.6 The Consultation Report also highlights a number of concerns from respondents regarding the potentially negative impact the revisions to the Council's Waste Management Strategy may have on the protected characteristics of age, disability and sex, plus socio-economic background and socio-economic disadvantage. The impacts of these concerns are detailed in the accompanying Equality Impact Assessment along with mitigation measures.

9.7 In those areas with wheelie bin collections, larger 240 litre bins are sufficient to accommodate 3 black bags. However, those households with standard 120 litre bins will be permitted 1 bag of side waste, no larger than 70 litres. Also, the majority of waste, (DMR, food waste, AHP/Nappies, green waste, bulky collections, etc.), will continue to be collected at current frequencies as set out below, so the storing of black bags will be minimal as most household waste is collected weekly.

- Dry Mixed Recycling – weekly collections
- Food Waste – weekly collections
- Green Waste – weekly (reduced collections during winter months)
- AHP/Nappies – residents can register for regular collections
- Bulky Waste – by appointment (chargeable).

In addition, the Council operates 6 CRC Sites which are open 7 days per week, together with 3 Re-Use shops.

9.8 Whilst the potential for fly-tipping exists, it should be noted that there was no increase in fly tipping when the Council moved from weekly to fortnightly refuse collections in 2013 and when side waste restrictions were introduced in 2018. Moreover, neighbouring Councils who have adopted 3-weekly collections have not reported any linked increases in fly-tipping and any would-be fly-tippers would be subject to enforcement action and prosecution.

9.9 Although concerns around vermin and hygiene issues are noted, it should be emphasised that pests such as rats and maggots feed on food waste, which is collected separately every week. Food waste should not be placed in black bags and presented for refuse collections. Further, it is also worth highlighting that kitchen roll containing leftover food, fat and oil, for example, can also be put in food waste, as well as small amounts of food cardboard packaging such as pizza boxes, chip paper and cream cake boxes. Therefore, there is no reason why food waste should be placed in black bags and thus no reason for an increase in vermin and associated pests.

9.10 Cat litter and hutch waste, (e.g., from hamsters, guinea pigs, etc.), should still be placed in black bags. However, arrangements will also be made for such waste to be able to be disposed of, on a limited and controlled basis, at the Council's Community Recycling Centres located throughout

RCT. Subject to scrutinising residents' existing waste needs and recycling habits, the Council also offers an Additional Bag Allowance option for residents who are struggling with the waste allowances, i.e. those that produce a lot of daily waste that cannot be recycled, and this process is currently under review.

- 9.11 Regarding clinical waste, the Council does not collect such waste, which comes under the purview of the NHS. More specifically in relation to Stoma bags and colostomy products, Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB does not accept stoma bags, as these can be disposed of in black bags and it recommended that the bag is emptied and rinsed or emptied and placed into another sealed bag(s) in order to prevent against the dissipation of unpleasant odours. (Residents should seek further advice from the Stoma Care Service at the Royal Glamorgan Hospital on emptying and sealing such bags).
- 9.12 The vast majority of house-hold waste, e.g., food waste, DMR, nappies, etc., will continue to be collected weekly and as such, there is no reduction in service, which would warrant equating with Council tax rates. Waste services also has to deal with a range of cost increases such as fuel and parts for vehicles and wider supply chain costs.
- 9.13 Turning to feedback from the residents' consultation with respect to a trial of reusable recycling sacks for the collection of DMR, as set out in Section 6 of the report; the main viewpoint being represented surrounds the design of the bags – i.e., they must come with flaps to be secured so that any recycling is kept dry and ideally not be white in colour, or else they risk becoming dirty / unsightly quickly, which may adversely impact on the success of any trial.
- 9.14 The service has sourced a variety of different types of reusable recycling sacks for consideration. The favoured type of sack for the trial measures 0.45m x 0.45m x 0.45m, made of a strengthened material and can be securely fastened by Velcro straps.
- 9.15 With exact trial areas still to be determined, it is proposed to issue each household in the trial areas with 3 such sacks, (which can accommodate the equivalent of more than 7 bags worth of DMR), and the sacks will be blue in colour to clearly distinguish them from other waste streams.
- 9.16 As the current collection schedules are long-standing, residents are well informed and have embedded routines regarding when general waste is to be put out. Therefore, adopting changes, both the move to 3-weekly refuse collections and the trial of reusable sacks for DMR collections, will require a clear communication campaign to address any concerns or confusion, and minimise any disruption. To that end, amongst other items to promote these changes, the Service will be developing a comprehensive list of Frequently Asked Question, (FAQ), which will be available to all residents on the Council's website.

10. SCRUTINY ENGAGEMENT

- 10.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was provided with an opportunity on the 14th December 2022 to consider the proposed changes to the service and provide feedback and comments. The feedback can be viewed in Appendix 4 – Feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 11.1 Moving forward, the programme of work to introduce a new operational refuse collection strategy, subject to agreement by Cabinet, would be incorporated into Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements to ensure resource requirements are reviewed, challenged and planned for.
- 11.2 High level initial estimates of revising residual collection frequency, (including volume control): 3-weekly collections based on current service arrangements, (bin collection in Cynon and Taf and black bag collection in Rhondda) – estimated annual saving of £0.8M, (additional costs built in for 1 additional recycling round of £127k).
- 11.3 Following on, should black bag waste be reduced in favour of DMR or food waste, then this will result in a reduction in processing charges, this being incorporated into the estimated saving at 10.2, as it is significantly more expensive to dispose of residual waste than recycling or food waste. Currently it is £23.20 cheaper to process a tonne of recycling and £70.21 cheaper to process a tonne of food waste than it is to process residual waste through our energy from waste contracts. Therefore, it will be important for the Council to continue to promote and where appropriate, enforce, the requirement to recycle waste and in doing so support the Council's climate change commitments and ensure best use of resources.
- 11.4 Expenditure associated with the supply of single use plastic sacks during 2022/23 is projected to be £867k for an estimated usage of 27 million units.
- 11.5 To move to re-usable sacks, the estimated one-off cost of purchasing of reusable sacks is of the order of £842k (subject to confirming precise specification informed by the trial) and on-going, (base budget), requirement of approximately circa £220k per year (for replacement sacks).
- 11.6 The estimated net base budget saving, (assuming the one-off purchase costs are funded), is £647k, (i.e. £867k current base budget for single use recycling bags less on-going base budget requirement for re-usable sacks).
- 11.7 However, it is important to state that such analysis does not take into consideration any increase in costs resulting from additional or amended kerbside collection resources, plus any impact on loading times and resources, and would require a more detailed analysis to be undertaken.

- 11.8 Moreover, further work is required to work through, in detail, the estimated operational impact (round review) and update the estimated savings.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 12.1 The Council, as a designated Waste Collection Authority, has a duty to collect household waste, under section 45 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, as amended (EPA 1990).

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

- 13.1 The Council has committed to minimising the amount of waste we send to landfill, achieving our recycling targets through weekly recycling and regular refuse collections, and reducing our carbon footprint. This supports the priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference' – 2020-24.

- 13.2 This report reflects the Sustainable Development principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and its work contributes to all seven national goals.

14. CONCLUSION

- 14.1 A change in refuse collection strategy, moving to 3-weekly collections, is crucial if the Council is going to achieve the Welsh Government recycling target of 70% by 2025 and move towards the RCT 80% target.

- 14.2 Investigation and analysis undertaken by the Waste Services section using food waste yield data as a baseline indicator for other recycling streams suggests that an increase in the Council's recycling rate could be achieved by adopting a new approach to collections of residual household waste.

- 14.3 In moving toward 3-weekly collections, with a strict volume control of a maximum of 3 black bags, (or no side waste for households with large wheelie bin collections), then there is potential to achieve the twin benefits of a reduction in general waste, as well as financial savings.

- 14.4 Whilst there is less evidence that extending to 3, or indeed 4-weekly waste collections in isolation has a strong influence on recycling rates, it is clear that they do offer the potential for financial savings.

- 14.5 Organic waste also has a high carbon footprint and as nearly 39% of the black bag waste sampled as part of the Council's investigations to inform the new collection strategy was organic waste, the proposed change in policy would have positive implications towards the Council's net zero climate change commitments.

- 14.6 It is proposed to implement 3-weekly refuse collections, (as set out in Section 5 of the report), from June 2023 and separately, to undertake a pilot of reusable recycling sacks, as set out in Section 6 of the report, later in the year.
- 14.7 Increasing engagement with residents to maximise their rates of recycling will be imperative to improving the Council's recycling performance and avoiding potential fines for missing Welsh Government recycling targets of 70% recycling for 2024/25. Recycling rates will be monitored and evaluated to inform the ongoing strategy for waste and recycling collections across RCTCBC as we strive to achieve the Council's recycling target of 80% by 2025 as part of our commitment to the *Tackling Climate Change* Strategy.
- 14.8 It is noted that since the original proposals were presented to Cabinet, several councils have confirmed that they are currently exploring options to reduce the frequency of residual waste collections, in order to reduce costs in light of continued exceptional budget pressures and in order to meet the Welsh Government 70% recycling targets for 2024/25 and avoid the risk of fines.

Appendix 1 (All Wales Refuse and Recycling Collection Models) (2021/22)

Local Authority	Bag or Bin	Frequency	Cost	Bag or Bin	Collection Method	Recycling Rate
Blaenau Gwent CBC	Bin & Bags	3-weekly	No cost, no additional waste allowance. 1 wheelie bin or 4 bags	Box Stack of 3 Top: Paper Middle: Plastic & Cans Bottom: Glass. Separate white sack for card	Kerbside Sort	65.75%
Bridgend CBC	Bags	Fortnightly	No cost, 2 bag limit (bags provided)	Orange bag: Card. Blue bag: Plastic, Cans & Foil. White bag: Paper. Black caddy for glass	Kerbside Sort	73.75%
Caerphilly CBC	Wheelie Bin	Fortnightly	No cost, no additional waste allowance	Brown wheelie bin with mixed recycling	Comingled	60.16%
Cardiff County Council	Bin & Bags	Fortnightly	No cost, 1 wheelie bin or 3 bag limit (bags provided twice a year)	Green recycling bags. Blue bin for glass	Comingled - separate glass	58.11%
Carmarthenshire County Council	Bags	Fortnightly	No cost, 3 bag limit	Bags	Comingled - separate glass	62.20%
Ceredigion County Council	Bags	3-weekly	No cost, 3 bag limit	Clear recycling bags. Separate box for glass	Comingled - separate glass	68.57%

City and County of Swansea	Bags	Fortnightly	No cost, 3 bag limit	Green bag: Cans, Glass, Paper & Card. Pink Bag: Plastic	Hybrid	63.94%
Conwy CBC	Wheelie Bin	4-weekly	No cost, no additional waste	Box Stack of 3	Kerbside Sort	70.51%
Denbighshire County Council	Bin & Bags	Fortnightly	No cost, no additional waste allowance	Bin & Bags	Comingled	65.53%
Flintshire County Council	Bin & Bags	Weekly	No cost, wheelie bin for HMO's no side waste, 1 bag limit	Blue bag: Paper & Card White/Grey bag: Cans White/Grey bag: Plastic and glass is collected separately in a blue box	Kerbside Sort	63.02%
Gwynedd Council	Bin & Bags	3-weekly	No cost, 1 bin or 3 bag limit. No additional waste	Box Stack of 3 Top: Paper Middle: Plastic & Cans Bottom: Glass. If residents have additional recyclable waste it can be placed in a blue box but not mixed	Kerbside Sort	63.82%
Isle of Anglesey CC	Wheelie Bin	3-weekly	No cost, no additional waste allowance	Box Stack of 3 Top: Paper Middle: Plastic & Cans Bottom: Glass & Card	Kerbside Sort	62.68%

Merthyr Tydfil CBC	Wheelie Bin	Fortnightly	No cost, no additional waste allowance	3 boxes: Box 1: Paper Box 2: Card Box 3: Glass. Plastic & cans collected in a blue reusable sack	Kerbside Sort	67.49%
Monmouthshire CC	Bags	Fortnightly	No cost, 2 bags limit	Box for glass fortnightly. Red bag: Paper/Card. Purple bag: Cans & Plastic	Kerbside Sort	70.41%
Neath Port Talbot CBC	Wheelie Bin	Fortnightly	No cost, 140L wheelie bin or 3 bag limit no additional waste	White Bag 1: Plastic & Cans, White Bag 2: Card, Black box with lid: Paper, Black Box without lid: Glass	Kerbside Sort	67.25%
Newport City Council	Wheelie Bin	Fortnightly	No cost, 180L bin (240L for properties with 8+ people in household). No additional waste	Red reusable bag: Plastic & Cans, Green box: Card & Glass, Blue box: Paper, Textiles & small electrical items	Kerbside Sort	67.81%
Pembrokeshire County Council	Bags	3-weekly	No cost, 3 bag limit every 3 weeks. Households are provided with 52 grey bags each year	Residents have the option to purchase a Box Stack of 3 Top: Paper Middle: Plastic, Cans & Foil Bottom: Glass. Reusable blue sack: Card. If residents don't have a stack they can use bags Blue reusable sack: Card, Blue Box: Paper, Red reusable	Kerbside Sort	72.83%

				sack: Plastic, cans & Foil, Green Box: Glass		
Powys County Council	Wheelie Bin	3-weekly	3 bag limit every 3 weeks. Households will be assessed and if they can't accommodate a bin they will be provided with 52 purple sacks. Residents can purchase additional sacks for £59.90 per roll of 26 to cover additional collection costs	Red box: Plastic & Cans, Aqua Box: Glass, Blue Box with lid: Paper & Card	Kerbside Sort	67.07%
RCTCBC	Wheelie Bin (Cynon & Taf) 2 Black bags Rhondda	Fortnightly	No additional allowance Bags not provided	Clear single use bags for dry mixed recycling, separate food, nappies and re-usable green sack.	Comingled	67.48%

Torfaen CBC	Wheelie Bin	Fortnightly	No cost, no additional waste allowance	Blue bag: Card, Black box: Paper, Plastic, Cans, Foil & Glass	Comingled - separate card	63.61%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	Bags	Fortnightly	No cost, no additional waste allowance	Orange bag: Card. Blue bag: Plastic, Cans & Foil. White bag: Paper. Grey caddy for glass. Blue Reusable bag: mixed recycling Paper, Glass. Card, Plastic, Foil, Cans & Cartons	Hybrid	71.07%
Wrexham CBC	Wheelie Bin	Fortnightly	No cost, no additional waste allowance	Green box: Plastic & Cans, Blue Sack : Card & Paper, Black box: Glass	Kerbside Sort	68.92%

Appendix 2

Let's Talk Waste Consultation Report

Appendix 3

Original Cabinet Report

Appendix 4

Feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Appendix 5

Equality Impact Assessment form including Socio-Economic Duty

Appendix 6

Welsh Language Impact Assessment Tool



Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Overview and Scrutiny

Contact Officer - Roger Waters, Director – Frontline Services



LET'S TALK WASTE

Consultation Report

Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC

January 2023



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report presents the findings of the Let's Talk Waste consultation.
- The consultation was conducted in-house. The consultation period ran from the 5th December 2022 and ended on the 9th January 2023.
- Views were sought on the following proposal;
ALL households across Rhondda Cynon Taf move to a three-weekly black bag/wheelie bin collection. A move to 3 weekly collections, will need to be supported by the continuation of the existing waste limits, which is currently 2 black bags per fortnight (the equivalent of 1 black bag per week) and would move to 3 black bags or a closed wheeled bin every 3 weeks.
- The following methods were used to consult with stakeholders;
 - An online [Let's Talk project](#) was developed, which included background information, helpful links, videos and a survey to enable people to be informed and give their views.
 - Promotion online on the Council's website/social media
 - An email was also sent to key stakeholders to promote the project and encourage participation.
 - A telephone consultation option was in place, 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.
 - The proposals were presented and discussed at the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 14th December 2022.
- People were asked if they would support a change in black bag/wheelie bin collection frequency if it safeguarded other key services. The 4087 responses received to this question were fairly balanced, with a slight majority of respondents supporting the proposed change, if it safeguarded other key services (50.4%).
- Respondents were asked if they supported the proposed change in frequency of black bag/wheelie bin waste collections across the County Borough to three weekly. Of 4100 responses received, 46.1% of respondents agreed with the proposal.
- The Cabinet report suggests that to increase recycling rates to the 70% target, a move to 3 weekly collections will need to be supported by the continuation of the existing waste limits which is currently 2 black bags per fortnight (the equivalent of 1 black bag per week) and would move to 3 black bags or a closed wheeled bin every 3 weeks. Respondents were asked if they supported this approach. A slight majority of the 4091 respondents said their household would not support this approach (51.6%).
- Of the 4098 responses received, 51.7% said that they had a pet and the majority said they disposed of waste in the black bag/wheelie bin (67.9%).

- People were asked if they would support a change to a reusable recycling sack and if the household would be able to store and use reusable sacks. The results in the table below show that the majority of the 4097 respondents to this question would support a change to a reusable recycling sack (62.2%) and would be able to store and use reusable sacks (55.7%).
- There are currently barriers to 100% recycling such as the packaging used in the goods we buy, or no other alternatives for some products we use. Respondents were asked what they thought the Council can do to encourage residents to dispose of less general waste and improve recycling? The following themes were identified from the 1550 responses.
 - The Council should collect a wider range of recyclables at the kerbside
 - Supermarkets and other businesses should be forced to reduce non-recyclable waste
 - Supply of current recycling bags has been unreliable, and bins would be more helpful
- Respondents were asked to provide any additional comments on the proposals or suggest any alternative proposals, the following are a selection of the themes identified.
 - Existing wheelie bins are too small for the proposed changes
 - Problems with open sacks or containers for recycling
 - Concerns about public health, vermin, smells, fly-tipping and general street waste increases
 - Disposal of animal waste and sanitary waste
 - Council Tax and perceived value for money
 - Larger families and residents without storage space
 - Disabled or non-driver residents cannot access tips/Community Recycling Centers
- Overall, there was concern about hygiene and street cleanliness, with a number of respondents reporting fears that existing rat and litter problems would be made worse by the proposed changes.
- A number of comments raised concerns about greater impacts on groups with protected characteristics including age, disability, sex and pregnancy. There are also concerns that link to socio-economic measures including both household deprivation (those without cars, for instance) and area deprivation (lack of services/ access to public services). Attention is also drawn by many comments to the realities of housing stock across the area (a lot of terraces, many without front garden or other external storage space, narrow lanes and steep inclines).
- Overall, 4110 (online) responses were received to the consultation and 5 emails.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the Let's Talk Waste and Recycling 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 previously noted that unprecedented challenges lie ahead for ALL services across local government due to the ongoing economic impact of Covid-19, Brexit, the conflict in Ukraine and the Cost of Living crisis, with double digit inflation and three-fold increases in local authority energy costs forecast for next year.
- 2.2 In such circumstances it is vital that the Council avoids non-recycling fines by meeting Welsh Government's recycling targets of 70% by 2024/25 and supporting Wales' efforts to become net-zero by 2030.
- 2.3 The Council now needs to explore all available options to increase the recycling rates across the County Borough. The proposal put forward for consultation was:
 - ALL households across Rhondda Cynon Taf move to a three-weekly black bag/wheelie bin collection. A move to 3 weekly collections, will need to be supported by the continuation of the existing waste limits, which is currently 2 black bags per fortnight (the equivalent of 1 black bag per week) and would move to 3 black bags or a closed wheeled bin every 3 weeks.

This proposal would help the Council to:

- Continue to deliver a FULL WEEKLY recycling service alongside these changes, including nappies, food waste, dry recycling and green waste (seasonal) - which should make up almost 80% of weekly household waste.
- Save vital funding of £800,000 in running costs and significantly reduce its annual carbon footprint.
- Divert any savings achieved to safeguard other key services such as social care or education.

- 2.4 The current recycling rate for Rhondda Cynon Taf stands at 67.48% and the Council must act now to ensure that it is not subjected to large fines of £140,000 for every 1% that it fails to reach the 70% target. This huge sum of money, at an already difficult time, could result in services having to be cut or affected to pay the fines.
- 2.5 It is estimated that the contents of 8 out of every 10 black bags that are put out for collection could be recycled, and the proposed changes would help us all stop and think about every item that is thrown away – and whether they can be recycled.
- 2.6 The Council was one of the first Councils in Wales to move away from weekly waste collections and limit the number of black bags that are collected. Over the past few years these changes have helped achieve a huge rise in the recycling rate for the whole County Borough.
- 2.7 The Council has come a very long way over the last decade to improve recycling rates and that is thanks to the efforts of our residents and our dedicated staff. In 2013, when fortnightly collections were introduced, the County Borough had a recycling rate of 43.3% and was facing potential fines for not hitting the Welsh Government target of 52% for 2013/14 - today the Council has a 67.48% recycling rate, a 24% increase.
- 2.8 The proposal should it be implemented is projected to achieve an increase in recycling equal to 2,600 Tonnes and significantly reduce its annual carbon footprint, equating to a 1.9% increase in the Council's overall recycling rate (based on 2021 figures), (increasing from 67.48% to 69.38%).

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The Let's Talks Waste consultation was conducted in-house and ran from the 5th December 2022 and ended on the 9th January 2023.
- 3.2 This section presents the methodology which was utilised to promote the consultation and collect feedback on the proposals.
- 3.3 An online [Let's Talk project](#) was developed, which included background information, helpful links, videos and a survey to enable people to be informed and give their views.
- 3.4 The project was promoted online through social media.
- 3.5 An email was also sent to key stakeholders to promote the project and encourage participation.
- 3.6 A telephone consultation option was in place, 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.
- 3.7 The proposals were presented and discussed at the [Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 14th December 2022.](#)
- 3.8 Overall, 4110 (online) responses were received to the consultation and 5 emails.

4 Questionnaire Results

- 4.1 The following section outlines the results from the survey hosted on [Let's Talk Waste](#), which received 4110 responses. Not every individual completing the survey would have provided a response for each of the questions asked. 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.¹

Collection Frequency

- 4.2 Respondents were informed that the projected budget savings for this change would be £800,000 in running costs per year and significantly reduce its annual carbon footprint. Such savings could then be diverted to safeguard other key Council services such as social care or education.

People were asked if they would support a change in black bag/wheelie bin collection frequency if it safeguarded other key services.

Table 1: Would you support a change in black bag/wheelie bin collection frequency, if it safeguarded other key services?

	%
Yes	50.4
No	49.6

The 4087 responses received to this question were fairly balanced, with a slight majority of respondents supporting the proposed change if it safeguarded other key services (50.4%).

¹ Between the 22nd December and the 7th January there was a notable increase in respondents filling in the questionnaire in favour of the preferred options, as compared to those respondents filling in the survey against the proposal.

- 4.3 Respondents were asked if they supported the proposed change in frequency of black bag/wheelie bin waste collections across the County Borough to three weekly.

Table 2: The Council is proposing to change the frequency of black bag/wheelie bin waste collections to 3 weekly (saving £800,000 per year). Do you agree with the proposal?

	%
Yes	46.1
No	53.9

Of 4100 responses received, 46.1% of respondents agreed with the proposal.

- 4.4 The Cabinet report suggests that to increase recycling rates to the 70% target, a move to 3 weekly collections will need to be supported by the continuation of the existing waste limits which is currently 2 black bags per fortnight (the equivalent of 1 black bag per week) and would move to 3 black bags or a closed wheeled bin every 3 weeks.

Respondents were asked if they supported this approach. A slight majority of the 4091 respondents said their household would not support this approach (51.6%).

Table 3 – Is this something you household could support?

	%
Yes	48.4
No	51.6

Animal Waste

4.5 Of the 4098 responses received, 51.7% said that they had a pet and the following table shows how they reported that they dispose of their waste.

Table 4 – If you have a pet, how do you dispose of their waste?

	%
Black bag/wheelie bin	67.9
Community Recycling Centre	2.1
Green Waste for hutch waste	5.3
Public Dog waste bin	40.0
Other	5.1

Note: Figures do not add up to 100% due to multiple response question

The 'other' responses included;

- **Repetition of the above options**
- **Down the toilet**
- **Nappy bin**
- **Compost**
- **Street Bin**

Recycling Bags

4.6 Respondents were informed that the Council purchases 30.2 million single use bags during a year at a cost of £867k. This is despite the Green Waste recycling service now utilising a re-usable Green sack and saving around 3 million bags per annum. We all know that we must reduce the use of single-use plastic wherever possible in our daily lives for the sake of our world and future generations.

4.7 People were asked if they would support a change to a reusable recycling sack and if the household would be able to store and use reusable sacks. The results in table 5 show that the majority of the 4097 respondents to this question would support a change to a reusable recycling sack (62.2%) and would be able to store and use reusable sacks (55.7%).

Table 5 – Reusable sacks

	Yes	No
Would you support a change to a reusable recycling sack?	62.2%	37.8%
Would your household be able to store and use reusable sacks?	55.7%	44.3%

Comments

- 4.8 There are currently barriers to 100% recycling such as the packaging used in the goods we buy, or no other alternatives for some products we use.

Respondents were asked what they thought the Council can do to encourage residents to dispose of less general waste and improve recycling? The following themes have been identified from the 1550 responses and a selection of the comments received are shown below;

Note: The full text of all comments received in the consultation are available for Cabinet and Officers to view.

The Council should collect a wider range of recyclables at the kerbside:

Kerb side soft plastic collection. Kerb side battery collection.

Introduce the recycling of soft plastics kerbside, instead of having to take to the supermarket. E.g., bread bags, plastic shopping bags etc.

Improve local recycling points, increase number and make them more accessible via foot, not everyone wants to put household recycling in the car and drive miles to the nearest recycling centre. With cost of living people cannot afford to be using petrol unnecessarily.

I recycle everything listed on the bags, but it is the soft plastics such as crisp packets that say are recyclable but aren't by RCT. This type of soft plastic makes up the majority of my black bag waste now.

Some waste ends up in black bags when it isn't possible to get to the recycling centres. Maybe extra things, like clothing, paint cans, small electrical, could be made part of kerbside recycling. Right now if you have 1 small paint can and an alarm clock to dispose of, you're unlikely to go to the recycling centre and so use black bag waste to dispose.

Supermarkets and other businesses should be forced to reduce non-recyclable waste:

Speak to the manufactures to get them to change the packaging

Press the supermarkets and manufacturers to change packaging. It's out of our hands

...manufacturers such as crisps need to change the packaging as a lot of them can't be put with ordinary recycling

Supply of current recycling bags has been unreliable, and bins would be more helpful:

Supply more recycling bags! There aren't any supplies in local shops which there used to be.

Provide recycling bags more easily. I.e. drop off new bags on collection days

Provide labelled bins such as glass bins or cardboard bins that are used in other county councils.

Recycling would be more appealing and easier to manage if recycling wheelie bins were supplied. Not bags that waste blows out of or get soaked in wet weather. Proper lidded bins so recycling can be stored outside.

More readily available access to recycling bags, and easier opportunities to recycle larger items more easily and with lower wait times.

- 4.9 Respondents were asked to provide any additional comments on the proposals or suggest any alternative proposals, the following are a selection of the 1378 comments received under a number of themes.

Existing wheelie bins are too small for the proposed changes:

You've reduced the size of the bins not to be able to support 3 weekly collections for the average family.

You need to make the black bag bins larger; I have 2 children and my bin is full to overfull with the current 2 weekly collections.

Problems with open sacks or containers for recycling:

The use of sacks is okay as long as they are sealable as I do not want to encourage pests and have to store open sacks in storms outside the house.

I also think the clear recycling bags should be replaced with bins similar to other councils - this will help to reduce the use of plastics and will provide more resilience in bad weather (the current bags have a habit of flying around in the wind)

Reusable sacks would end up everywhere because the green waste ones just get dumped in the middle of the road and end up lost. Also they would end up wet when raining and then Couldn't be taken back in the house.

Changing the recycling bags to reusable ones won't be effective as these get pinched easily or blown away.

Concerns about public health, vermin, smells, fly-tipping and general street waste increases:

The only reason we would not support a 3 weekly collection is because of hygiene, and rodent worries. We would be unable to keep 3 weeks of black bags away from the elements and would worry about the smell and hygiene of our garden as well as attracting rodents.

There will be an increase in rats, rubbish on our streets, fly tipping.

The streets will stink and fly tipping will increase even more plus people will lose their jobs.

The less frequent waste is collected the more fly tipping will occur. The amount of fly tipping in the lanes and rubbish strewn on the streets is already disgusting

The smell of pet waste in bins would make three weekly collections a poor choice

The issue is not moving 3-weekly due to overflowing bins - it's the smell of the bins after two weeks. It's a public health issue and with hotter summers expected to increase, RCT will smell like a cesspit.

Disposal of animal waste and sanitary waste:

Female sanitary items currently go into wheelie bin collections. This would not be hygienic if bins were only collected every 3 weeks.

Storing black bags of non-recyclables together with cat litter and other pet products is difficult especially in summertime.

Special bin for pet waste recycling. which would free up space in general waste.

I'm not fully against 3 weekly collection if there is alternative collection for cat litter dog mess etc. as most days I need to put dog mess in my

own black bags due to dog bins being full and after a week it's awful in the Summer after 2 it's crazy after 3 would be unbearable

Council Tax and perceived value for money:

Unless there is an incentive for household i.e. a reduction in council tax, the lazy ones will not bother, they will just fly tip their rubbish as they do now and more so.

With a family of 4 we recycle everything we possibly can, and our green bin is still full on a fortnight basis! You put our council tax up and now want to change our bins to 3 weekly what are we actually paying all this council tax for

Will my council tax be less if it moves to 3 weeks if so I will support it?

Yet again less service for more money from rct. Refuse is the only service I use and now you don't even want to that!

Larger families and residents without storage space:

This will be difficult for those with larger households, children and pets. It would increase pollution and contamination, meaning a risk to public health whilst degrading the environment. Results from the lack of waste collection can easily been seen from the recent strikes in Scotland.

We have a very small bin for a family of 3 and we recycle all we can. Until supermarkets dispose of non-recyclable wrapping this is not possible!

Families with 4+ people in one house will struggle with the limit on general waste and reduced collections. Again, I think other people may struggle if there are multiple sacks/bins for recycling due to lack of space in their homes.

Thousands of houses in RCT are terraces straight on the pavement, with no wheelie bins. Usually bags are kept outside back doors and even on fortnightly collections we used to have these ripped open by wildlife when we lived in a terrace with no wheelie bins. Older people already struggle to carry 2 weeks' worth of black bags through their houses to put out, I imagine waiting 3 weeks would be really hard for some.

The proposal for reusable recycling bags is not ideal, as they may end up getting quite dirty and smelly - I think it may be a lot for some homes with little storage to accommodate this.

Disabled or non-driver residents cannot access tips/ Community Recycling Centres:

I formerly lived in Newport and that council also accepted small electrical, and clothing recycling with the weekly recycling collections, something that again would be more convenient than RCT policy of having to take these to a recycling centre. Not everyone can do that

And please have a thought for residents who cannot get to council tips/ recycling centres to access special recycling points or drop off larger items - fly tipping happens around here (Trefforest) because of the cost of bulky collections, especially at the end of term times when students move in/ out of properties.

The community recycling centres aren't really accessible for residents without a car - would it be possible to have something like a temporary skip?

I don't agree as there will be more infestation of rats etc, what about the elderly who can't get to a recycling centre to dispose of their rubbish or disabled .

General support for the proposal

Happy to support the changes, we have to put less in landfill and recycle more

I support the move to 3 weekly but have a very small bin so that would be overflowing. If the council were to introduce the 3 weekly rubbish collection you should give residents the option to have a large bin either free or. Cheap.

I support the move away from disposable recycling bags. However careful consideration is needed into the design of recycling sacks or boxes for use...

Happy with 3 weekly bins as don't support 4 weekly

If people recycle properly I see no issue at all on 3 weekly black bags

- 4.10 Overall, there is a lot of concern about hygiene and street cleanliness, with a number of respondents reporting fears that existing rat and litter problems would be made worse by the proposed changes.
- 4.11 A number of comments raised concerns about greater impacts on groups with protected characteristics including age, disability, sex and pregnancy. There are also concerns that link to socio-economic measures including both household deprivation (those without cars, for instance) and area deprivation (lack of services/ access to public services). Attention is also drawn by many comments to the realities of

housing stock across the area (a lot of terraces, many without front garden or other external storage space, narrow lanes and steep inclines).

About you

- 4.12 Under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, the Council has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. Respondents were asked how the proposals affect you because of?:
1. Gender
 2. Age
 3. Ethnicity
 4. Disability
 5. Sexuality
 6. Religion / belief
 7. Gender identity
 8. Relationship status
 9. Pregnancy
 10. Preferred language
- 4.13 With regards to the proposals, and the impact it may have, respondents were asked how they could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive, Negative or Neutral) and if, in any way, it treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language? How neutral effects could become positive, how positive effects could be increased, or negative effects be decreased?
- 4.14 The comments received for the above 2 questions have been made available for the development of the associated impact assessments.
- 4.15 Of particular note are a large number of comments stating that they feel the proposal will disproportionately, and discriminatorily, affect older people, people with disabilities, large families and people with health conditions. Concerns are also raised about people living in flats or smaller houses who do not have storage space for waste or holding reusable sacks, which would disproportionately affect those living in areas or under conditions of socio-economic disadvantage or deprivation. Some indicative comments on these themes are included below.

Impact on people living in smaller properties

“A large proportion of houses are terraced which presents problems with the storage of black bin bags.”

"Most RCT houses are small terraced and people don't have the capacity to hold 3 weeks worth of rubbish."

"Most houses in Aberdare are small, terraced houses. We don't have the space to store recyclable sacks indoors."

"They smell already at two weeks especially for people on terraced streets who have to bring the bins through the house."

"Social housing 2 bed place no room for bins inside or out. Live in rat infested area."

Impact on elderly residents

"Age, I need user friendly things to help me live independently."

"Age difficult to manage reusable bags, store & carry"

"I am finding it difficult to store bags for 2 weeks let alone 3 as I have limited space available. As I am in my 60's they are very heavy to move"

"As an elderly person carrying the recycling in large canvas type bags would be problematic"

Impact on residents with disabilities

"I'm 40 disabled and live alone with only a carer coming in to see to my personal care. Not their job to sort waste out. They don't have time. And they are very time constricted."

"Discrimination and this is not ever taken in to consideration how it will impact people like myself."

"Also no facilities for adult heavy periods and incontinence waste because there not prescribed so no evidence for this."

"I'm disabled and it's incredibly hard to move my wheelie bin on 2 week collections let alone 3"

"I have a bad back. This would impact me physically. I also have dyslexia so keeping track of dates would make it difficult"

"Dementia and autism so change is unbearable"

"Having a person with a disability at home means that more waste that cannot be recycled is produced. This is not necessarily to do with sanitary items such as incontinence pads etc but small household items or clothing which is no longer able to be recycled. These take up a lot of room in the waste bins which often means we are struggling for"

room for normal rubbish. We recycle as much as possible but every week there are items which we have no way of disposing of, other than putting them in the waste bin. "

Impact on large families

"none of the above but it would impact me due to my family size"

"Larger families are disadvantaged to proposed 3 weekly changes"

"Family of 5, the bin is full after 1 and a half weeks"

"I think you need to be more flexible with houses depending on how many people live there because single people won't need as much bin space as big families."

Other perceived impacts

"Pregnancy- due to having to store waste longer."

"My dad has asthma. Keeping animal waste festering in the house will make him worse."

"I don't drive so not easy to get items to recycling centres as my illness prevents it"

"Having to women who menstruate I feel that 3 weekly would lead to these hanging around to long unless we were given bins and bags like the nappies"

"With multiple dogs, I have 2 black bags worth of waste every fortnight. This waste smells and would become unsustainable to not be disposed of for a 3-week period."

"I do not have the ability to transport this waste to a facility myself meaning this discriminatory reduction of services (no doubt still forcing an increase in council tax upon us) comes at the detriment of the populace the council is supposedly serving."

5 Letter and Email Responses

5.1 The following section outlines a summary of the comments from emails received.

A total of 5 emails were received from residents expressing their views on the consultation. Residents noted their disfavour of the 3 weekly black bag collection, as this would result to black bag being left outside the home for longer periods of time thus increasing the likelihood of animals breaking the bags and result to increased pest concerns.

Residents noted the need for the Council to increase dog waste bins across the Borough to prevent waste contamination in the black bags.

The following are a summary of the emails.

Emails received:
<p><i>I am against moving to three weeks for rubbish collection as I find that as a household, we just about manage with the current system.</i></p> <p><i>(06/12/2022)</i></p>
<p><i>I am emailing in regards to the proposal of moving the refuse collection from 2 weekly to 3 weekly pick ups.</i></p> <p><i>Not only is this unhygienic leaving waste for 3 weeks in a bin outside (i.e., cat and animal litter, dog waste, sanitary products etc), this will also attract rats to the local area, along with unpleasant smells (especially in the summer time). Are the council going to provide free pest control services to counter act this problem if that is the case? I already have a pest issue (living close to the mountain side) on the 2 weekly refuse collection. I can only imagine how bad the issue is going to get if the council moves to 3 weekly.</i></p> <p><i>There is also a question of storage - where are people going to securely store 3 waste bins, I know that I do not have room for 3 plastic bins to store them in until collection on a 3 week basis.</i></p> <p><i>I also fear that fly tipping will increase. This is already a huge issue in RCT and 3 weekly bin collections will only add to this ever growing problem. The local tips do not accept black bags anymore, so it will only be a matter of time before they end up on our mountains.</i></p> <p><i>If for whatever reason, someone missed their black bag collection (ie they were in hospital or on holidays), this would mean they could potentially have a bag of rubbish in their garden for up to 6 weeks at a time!</i></p> <p><i>The idea of wheelie bins would not work in my street also, given steps to and from my back garden and the hill to the front of the property. I also do not</i></p>

want to break my back by lifting 3 weeks worth of refuse in a large wheelie bin to put out for collection every 3 weeks.

I question where my council tax payments go as this is just another form of the council cutting costs. Will I see a reduction in my monthly council tax to reflect the reduction in service I am receiving if this is the case?

*I look forward to hear your response.
Regards*

(06/12/22)

I am against moving to three weeks for rubbish collection as I find that as a household, we just about manage with the current system.

Kind regards,

(06/12/22)

In order to achieve this they will need to increase the amount of dog waste bins around and collections. The recycling centres will need to start allowing people to drop black bags off there, with pets waste. People can't have cat litter and dog poop kept out in the garden for 3 weeks the smell will be horrendous in the summer and the massive increase in rats will add a different dimension

(Contact Centre, 14/06/22)

Dear Consultation Team,

1. Comments regarding RCT's proposals:

1) 3 weekly black bag collections:

This is OK for us, since we currently only put out 1 bag, typically weighing less than 2kg, every fortnight. However, fresh fish and meat wrappings, which cannot be recycled, do smell badly after only one week in the bin and worse after 2 weeks, so will probably be a lot worse after 3 weeks, especially between April and September, when the weather is warmer.

However, I am not sure that this will change the behaviour of a minority of residents who either only partially recycle or the "die hards" who do not do any recycling. What is to stop them simply keeping their black bags for longer, or putting any excess black bags outside another property, or worst of all, fly tipping?

2) Reusable sacks for "dry" recycling:

This may be a better alternative to the clear bags but the advantages/disadvantages of both solutions are not so clear cut, so I have the following questions to be considered regarding the reusable sacks:

- a) Will the reusable sacks be cheaper than the clear bags in the longer term?*
- b) Will the reusable sacks be more environmentally friendly or recyclable than the clear bags in the long term?*

- *Will there be a scheme to recycle old and damaged bags, so that they do not eventually end up in landfill?*
- c) *How many reusable bags will be provided?*
 - *How will the quantity of bags allow for exceptional times such as Christmas, when residents put out a lot more recycling than usual?*
- d) *Will residents have to pay for extra bags and to replace lost or damaged bags?*
- e) *What will be the size and shape of the bags?*
- f) *Will the bags be closed or open?*
 - *If open, then the contents will get wet and/or potentially blown away in windy weather.*
 - *Note that wet paper and cardboard weighs a lot more than when it is dry.*
- g) *Where are residents meant to keep these bags during the week between collections?*
 - *Will they fit inside a standard, large plastic dustbin, or will the residents be expected to simply leave the bags exposed to the elements and then we have to carry soaking wet bags through our houses to put them out?*
 - *Again, wet paper and cardboard weighs a lot more than when it is dry.*
- h) *What is to stop these bags from blowing away, or being stolen, or moved, after the collection – particularly if the residents are away from the house all day or for several days?*
- i) *Will the reusable bags mean more work and time for the collection operators?*
 - *With the clear sacks they pick up several bags in one go, often from more than one property, throw them in the back of the recycling lorry and move on to the next properties. With the reusable bags, the operators will not be able to pick up as many bags at once and will have to collect from one property at a time, returning to each property with the bags after emptying the them.*
 - *I think that there will be a lot of reusable sacks left in the streets for residents sort through and pick up after the collection.*

2. Comments on black bag statement made in the consultation introduction:

“It is estimated that 8 out of every 10 black bags that are put out for collection could be recycled, and it is thought that this change would help us all to stop and think about every item that is thrown away – and whether they can be recycled.”

The above statement from the introduction seems to be an exaggeration, or to be based on black bag waste before the big improvements in recycling. I explain my reasoning as follows:

As per RCT's guidance and our personal experience, it is not possible to recycle all household items. In fact the article states that recycling should make up 80% of household waste. Therefore, it is expected that every household will put out a black bag for some, if not all, black bag

collections, representing around 20% of their waste. Therefore, if the vast majority of residents are participating in recycling, as is confirmed by RCT's current recycling rate of 67.48%, then the vast majority of black bags put out contain only, or at least primarily, non-recyclable items. So, if 32.52% of our waste is going into black bag waste, then 12.52% of our waste is mistakenly put into black bags, instead of recycling, or to put it another way, 38.5% of the waste put in black bags could be recycled, or 3.85 out of every 10 black bags could be recycled.



Appendix 3 (Original Cabinet Report)

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

29th NOVEMBER 2022

WASTE SERVICES – REVISED WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – FRONTLINE SERVICES, IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE, (CLLR A CRIMMINGS), AND THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (CLLR A MORGAN)

Author: Roger Waters, Director – Frontline Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:

- (i) Outline 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
- (ii) seek Cabinet’s approval to initiate a consultation exercise in respect of the options for change as presented in the report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet notes the content of the report and duly resolves 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

- 2.2 Initiate a trial of the use of reusable recycling sacks for the collection of dry mixed recycling, (DMR).
- 2.3 That, subject to 2.1 and 2.2 above, 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.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council's Corporate Plan, ***Making A Difference (2020- 2024)*** sets out the Council's commitments to Keeping RCT clean through efficient street cleaning services, minimising the amount of waste we send to landfill, achieving our recycling targets through weekly recycling and regular refuse collections, and reducing our carbon footprint.
- 3.2 Additionally, the Welsh Government's strategy to make the circular economy in Wales a reality, ***Beyond Recycling***, stipulates the next minimum target for the recycling of household waste is 70% by 2025, as we look to maintain our trajectory towards zero waste nation by 2050.
- 3.3 Further, Council strategy; ***Making Rhondda Cynon Taf Carbon Neutral by 2030***, commits the Council to ensuring it recycles or reuses 80% of all municipal waste by 2025 by supporting residents and businesses on initiatives that promote waste minimisation and reuse of materials, as well as investing in technology to increase the amount of waste we recycle and reuse locally.
- 3.4 All Welsh Local Authorities work towards recycling targets set by Welsh Government and, as noted above, the next milestone target is for 2025 where 70% of waste collected must be recyclable. (Failure to reach these targets will result in the Council being issued with heavy financial penalties).

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 RCT currently collects residual household waste fortnightly, (with Commercial waste collections taking place weekly apart from customers from RCT Primary Schools, who have fortnightly collections). Recent analysis of the Council's recycling rate showed that it is currently at 67.48%.
- 4.2 The current situation sees domestic waste in the Rhondda collected via black bags with the Cynon and Taf having collections via wheelie bins.

- 4.3 There are currently 13 Councils which collect household waste on a fortnightly basis, with an average recycling rate of 66.27%.
- 4.4 Additionally, there are currently 6 Councils which collect waste on a 3-weekly basis, with an average recycling rate of 66.79%.
- 4.5. Finally, 1 Council collects waste on a weekly basis, with a recycling rate of 63.02% and 1 Council collects waste on a 4-weekly basis with a recycling rate of 70.51%.
- 4.6 Of all 22 Councils in Wales, those with the highest recycling rates, (i.e. those with current rates in excess of 70%, namely: Bridgend CBC, Pembrokeshire CC, The Vale of Glamorgan CBC, Conwy CBC and Monmouthshire CC), all have strict volume controls on the amount of waste they collect, regardless of collection frequency. (Please see Appendix 1 for further information).

5. THE MOVE TO 3-WEEKLY REFUSE COLLECTIONS ACROSS RCT

- 5.1 When undertaking a study to model the potential impact of changing collection frequency, food waste yield data was used to create a baseline; it is seen as a good indicator for other streams of recycling.
- 5.2 Based on recent data, and noting comparisons with other Welsh Council's, there would appear to be no substantial evidence to suggest that there would be a significant increase in food waste yield per household resulting from a move to 3-weekly waste collections on their own in isolation. However, there is good evidence to suggest that accompanied with strong volume control measures such as limiting the amount of general waste that can be presented, (i.e. a maximum of 3 black bags per household, per collection or no side waste for those with large wheelie bin collections), then a move to 3-weekly collections would be beneficial.
- 5.3 It is estimated that by adopting this approach across RCT, it could lead to as much as a 20% increase, which would result in an additional food waste yield per household generating around 2,600 Tonnes per annum additional recycling.
- 5.4 Achieving additional food waste recycling of circa 2,600T per year, would enable estimated processing cost savings of up to £350k in a full year.
- 5.5 When applying these assumptions to 2021 data, the projected additional 2,600 Tonne increase would have equated a 1.9% increase in the Council's overall recycling rate, (increasing from 67.48% to 69.38%). Furthermore, it is anticipated that there will also be an uplift in the dry recycling to add to this, but this is difficult to reliably quantify at this time.
- 5.6 Moving to 3-weekly collections will also lead to a reduction in refuse collection rounds, which is likely to have an impact on the current staffing model of Waste Services. However, any reductions to the staffing model

will be managed through our agreed employment procedures, which will include the use of the Council's Redeployment and Voluntary Early Retirement / Voluntary Redundancy Schemes.

- 5.7 Further, it is envisaged that a move to 3-weekly collections will also result in a reduction in the Council's carbon footprint. The Service currently utilises 60 Refuse Collection Vehicles, (RCVs), to undertake waste and recycling collection rounds and it is estimated that as many as 4 of these vehicles could be saved, (and removed from the Council's Fleet).
- 5.8 Based on removing two 26t vehicles and two 22t vehicles, estimated vehicle running cost savings would be £80k in a full year, (noting that a reduction in vehicle replacement capital expenditure will also be realised over the medium term).
- 5.9 A recent report from the Carbon Trust identified the Council's fleet contributing 7% of the Council's baseline carbon footprint. As part of the proposed service change, the removal of four RCVs, with annual journeys totalling more than 32k miles, would equate to saving of approximately 100TCO_{2e} per year. This can be seen as part of a phased approach to give the Council options and flexibility going forward to help ensure its Carbon Footprint is lowered and zero emissions targets are met in line with wider strategies and local plans.

6. THE TRIAL OF REUSEABLE RECYCLING SACKS

- 6.1 The Council currently issues single-use clear plastic bags to residents for the purpose of presenting their dry mixed recycling at the kerbside.
- 6.2 Records show that the Council purchased 30.2 million single use bags during 2021/22, at a cost of £877k (£867k full year estimated cost for 2022/23).
- 6.3 In November 2021 the Council issued reusable sacks for green waste collection as a replacement for the single use plastic bags. Implemented successfully, it also led to saving on the use of 3 million single-use recycling bags and it is considered that a switch to reusable bags for the collection of dry mixed recycling would result in an even higher number of single-use bags no longer being required.
- 6.4 An initial assessment of the potential to move to using reusable sacks has been undertaken and is summarised below, with further detail on technical, operational considerations and observations from initial trials included at Appendix 2.
- 6.5 Officers have carried out an initial technical assessment of the potential switch to reusable bags for kerbside recycling. Trials have taken place at Bryn Pica using the Council's existing reusable bags, as well as other sample bags provided by the same supplier, (many of which are in use by other Council's for the collection of domestic tin and plastic waste).

The trials were limited to general observations regarding volume, weight, contamination and manual handling.

- 6.6 There are many examples of Waste Collection Authorities within the UK using reusable sacks for the collection of recyclable materials. Reusable bags can be considered to be a more sustainable option than single-use plastic bags, although further investigations into their service life would need to be undertaken to more accurately quantify annual cost savings, as it is envisaged that replacement reusable sacks would be required after a few years.
- 6.7 However, there is no evidence to suggest that a change to reusable sacks will increase the Council's overall recycling performance or act as a barrier to further improvements. Hence the need for piloting this initiative to fully understand the potential impacts.
- 6.8 Based on a scenario of re-useable sacks for recycling being implemented, this would also enable budget savings to be realised as part of the current bag distribution arrangements.
- 6.9 It is proposed that the results of an ongoing consultation event, (see Section 9 below), be considered alongside a trial of reusable recycling sacks in designated areas. Trials would allow the service to assess the operational impact, recycling volumes and quality of recycling produced. It would also enable further public engagement to obtain feedback and observations from service users which would be used to inform the potential for wider roll-out incorporating any amendments arising from lessons learned in the trials. Baseline data will be gathered for the selected trial sites so that the changes can be accurately captured with the outcomes reported back to Cabinet for further consideration.

7. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 7.1 An Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full report is not required. There are limited negative or adverse equality or diversity implications associated with this report, which can be easily mitigated.
- 7.2 Under the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010, Local Authorities are required to have due regard to the need to:
1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination.
 2. Advance equality of opportunity.
 3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 7.3 The Council is committed to meeting the requirements of the Equality Act and in doing so contributing to the national Well-being goal of a more

equal Wales, required by the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

8. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no Welsh language implications as a result of the recommendations in this report. However, although the recommendations to initiate a public consultation with regards to potential service changes in relation to the collection of waste do not have any direct impact on the Welsh language, opportunities for the service to maintain, grow or upskill Welsh speaking staff will remain a priority.

9. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 9.1 As an extension to National Recycle Week that took place in mid-October, Waste Services launched a “Let’s Talk” consultation campaign.
- 9.2 The campaign centres around the recycling and waste activities of RCT residents and aims to gather views and opinions on how residents are currently disposing their waste and recycling, how often they are using the kerbside services and how they think recycling could be made easier.
- 9.3 With specific regard to the option for change set out in Section 5, it is recommended that Cabinet initiates a public consultation exercise with residents in relation to this proposal. Subject to Cabinet’s agreement to initiate a consultation, feedback from that exercise would be reported back to Cabinet in order for it to determine whether, and if so how, it would wish to proceed with the recommended option for change.
- 9.4 As the current collection schedules are very long-standing, residents are well informed and have embedded routines regarding when general waste is to be put out. Therefore, any changes, either the move to 3-weekly refuse collections or trials of reusable sacks for DMR collections, would require clear communication campaigns to address any concerns or confusion, and minimise any disruption.
- 9.5 Furthermore, service management would strive to ensure any changes are reflected online, as 89% of all waste service queries reach the department digitally.
- 9.6 In addition to the above, it is also recommended that a trial is undertaken of reusable recycling sacks, as set out in Section 6 of the report, the results of which will be reported back to Cabinet separately for consideration.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 10.1 Moving forward, the programme of work to introduce a new operational refuse collection strategy, subject to agreement by Cabinet, would be

incorporated into Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements to ensure resource requirements are reviewed, challenged and planned for.

- 10.2 High level initial estimates of revising residual collection frequency, (including volume control): 3-weekly collections based on current service arrangements, (bin collection in Cynon and Taf and black bag collection in Rhondda) – estimated annual saving of £0.8M, (additional costs built in for 1 additional recycling round of £127k).
- 10.3 Following on should black bag waste be reduced in favour of DMR or food waste, then this will result in a reduction in processing charges, this being incorporated into the estimated saving at 10.2, as it is significantly more expensive to dispose of residual waste than recycling or food waste. Currently it is £23.20 cheaper to process a tonne of recycling and £70.21 cheaper to process a tonne of food waste than it is to process residual waste through our energy from waste contracts. It will therefore be important for the Council to continue to promote and where appropriate, enforce, the requirement to recycle waste and in doing so support the Council's climate change commitments and ensure best use of resources.
- 10.4 Expenditure associated with the supply of single use plastic sacks during 2022/23 is projected to be £867k for an estimated usage of 27 million units.
- 10.5 To move to re-usable sacks, the estimated one-off cost of purchasing of reusable sacks is £842k and on-going, (base budget), requirement of approximately £220k per year (for replacement sacks).
- 10.6 The estimated net base budget saving, (assuming the one-off purchase costs are funded), is £647k, (i.e. £867k current base budget for single use recycling bags less on-going base budget requirement for re-usable sacks).
- 10.7 However, it is important to state that such analysis does not take into consideration any increase in costs resulting from additional or amended kerbside collection resources, plus any impact on loading times and resources, and would require a more detailed analysis to be undertaken.
- 10.8 Moreover, further work is required to work through, in detail, the estimated operational impact (round review) and update the estimated savings.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 11.1 The Council, as a designated Waste Collection Authority, has a duty to collect household waste, under section 45 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, as amended (EPA 1990).

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

- 12.1 The Council has committed to minimising the amount of waste we send to landfill, achieving our recycling targets through weekly recycling and regular refuse collections, and reducing our carbon footprint. This supports the priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference' – 2020-24.
- 12.2 This report reflects the Sustainable Development principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and its work contributes to all seven national goals.

13. CONCLUSION

- 13.1 A change in refuse collection strategy, moving to 3-weekly collections, is crucial if the Council is going to achieve the Welsh Government recycling target of 70% by 2025 and move towards the RCT 80% target.
- 13.2 Investigation and analysis undertaken by the Waste Services section using food waste yield data as a baseline indicator for other recycling streams suggests that an increase in the Council's recycling rate could be achieved by adopting a new approach to collections of residual household waste.
- 13.3 In moving toward 3-weekly collections, with a strict volume control of a maximum of 3 black bags, (or no side waste for households with large wheelie bin collections), then there is potential to achieve the twin benefits of a reduction in general waste, as well as financial savings.
- 13.4 Whilst there is less evidence that extending to 3, or indeed 4-weekly waste collections in isolation has a strong influence on recycling rates, it is clear that they do offer the potential for financial savings.
- 13.5 Organic waste also has a high carbon footprint and as nearly 39% of the black bag waste sampled as part of the Council's investigations to inform the new collection strategy was organic waste, the proposed change in policy would have positive implications towards the Council's net zero climate change commitments.
- 13.6 It is proposed that a public consultation exercise is undertaken on the proposal to move to 3-weekly refuse collections, (as set out in Section 5 of the report), and separately, a pilot is undertaken on reusable recycling sacks, as set out in Section 6 of the report.
- 13.7 Increasing engagement with residents to maximise their rates of recycling will be imperative to improving the Council's recycling performance and avoiding potential fines for missing Welsh Government recycling targets of 70% recycling for 2024/25. Recycling rates will be monitored and evaluated to inform the ongoing strategy for waste and recycling collections across RCTCBC as we strive to achieve the Council's recycling target of 80% by 2025 as part of our commitment to the *Tackling Climate Change Strategy*.

Appendix 1 (All Wales Refuse and Recycling Collection Models) (2021/22)

Local Authority	Bag or Bin	Frequency	Cost	Bag or Bin	Collection Method	Recycling Rate
Blaenau Gwent CBC	Bin & Bags	3-weekly	No cost, no additional waste allowance. 1 wheelie bin or 4 bags	Box Stack of 3 Top: Paper Middle: Plastic & Cans Bottom: Glass. Separate white sack for card	Kerbside Sort	65.75%
Bridgend CBC	Bags	Fortnightly	No cost, 2 bag limit (bags provided)	Orange bag: Card. Blue bag: Plastic, Cans & Foil. White bag: Paper. Black caddy for glass	Kerbside Sort	73.75%
Caerphilly CBC	Wheelie Bin	Fortnightly	No cost, no additional waste allowance	Brown wheelie bin with mixed recycling	Comingled	60.16%
Cardiff County Council	Bin & Bags	Fortnightly	No cost, 1 wheelie bin or 3 bag limit (bags provided twice a year)	Green recycling bags. Blue bin for glass	Comingled - separate glass	58.11%
Carmarthenshire County Council	Bags	Fortnightly	No cost, 3 bag limit	Bags	Comingled - separate glass	62.20%
Ceredigion County Council	Bags	3-weekly	No cost, 3 bag limit	Clear recycling bags. Separate box for glass	Comingled - separate glass	68.57%

City and County of Swansea	Bags	Fortnightly	No cost, 3 bag limit	Green bag: Cans, Glass, Paper & Card. Pink Bag: Plastic	Hybrid	63.94%
Conwy CBC	Wheelie Bin	4-weekly	No cost, no additional waste	Box Stack of 3	Kerbside Sort	70.51%
Denbighshire County Council	Bin & Bags	Fortnightly	No cost, no additional waste allowance	Bin & Bags	Comingled	65.53%
Flintshire County Council	Bin & Bags	Weekly	No cost, wheelie bin for HMO's no side waste, 1 bag limit	Blue bag: Paper & Card White/Grey bag: Cans White/Grey bag: Plastic and glass is collected separately in a blue box	Kerbside Sort	63.02%
Gwynedd Council	Bin & Bags	3-weekly	No cost, 1 bin or 3 bag limit. No additional waste	Box Stack of 3 Top: Paper Middle: Plastic & Cans Bottom: Glass. If residents have additional recyclable waste it can be placed in a blue box but not mixed	Kerbside Sort	63.82%
Isle of Anglesey CC	Wheelie Bin	3-weekly	No cost, no additional waste allowance	Box Stack of 3 Top: Paper Middle: Plastic & Cans Bottom: Glass & Card	Kerbside Sort	62.68%




Merthyr Tydfil CBC	Wheelie Bin	Fortnightly	No cost, no additional waste allowance	3 boxes: Box 1: Paper Box 2: Card Box 3: Glass. Plastic & cans collected in a blue reusable sack	Kerbside Sort	67.49%
Monmouthshire CC	Bags	Fortnightly	No cost, 2 bags limit	Box for glass fortnightly. Red bag: Paper/Card. Purple bag: Cans & Plastic	Kerbside Sort	70.41%
Neath Port Talbot CBC	Wheelie Bin	Fortnightly	No cost, 140L wheelie bin or 3 bag limit no additional waste	White Bag 1: Plastic & Cans, White Bag 2: Card, Black box with lid: Paper, Black Box without lid: Glass	Kerbside Sort	67.25%
Newport City Council	Wheelie Bin	Fortnightly	No cost, 180L bin (240L for porperties with 8+ people in household). No additional waste	Red reusable bag: Plastic & Cans, Green box: Card & Glass, Blue box: Paper, Textiles & small electrical items	Kerbside Sort	67.81%
Pembrokeshire County Council	Bags	3-weekly	No cost, 3 bag limit every 3 weeks. Households are provided with 52 grey bags each year	Residents have the option to purchase a Box Stack of 3 Top: Paper Middle: Plastic, Cans & Foil Bottom: Glass. Reusable blue sack: Card. If residents don't have a stack they can use bags Blue reusable sack: Card, Blue Box: Paper, Red reusable	Kerbside Sort	72.83%

				sack: Plastic, cans & Foil, Green Box: Glass		
Powys County Council	Wheelie Bin	3-weekly	3 bag limit every 3 weeks. Households will be assessed and if they can't accommodate a bin they will be provided with 52 purple sacks. Residents can purchase additional sacks for £59.90 per roll of 26 to cover additional collection costs	Red box: Plastic & Cans, Aqua Box: Glass, Blue Box with lid: Paper & Card	Kerbside Sort	67.07%
RCTCBC	Wheelie Bin (Cynon & Taf) 2 Black bags Rhondda	Fortnightly	No additional allowance Bags not provided	Clear single use bags for dry mixed recycling, separate food, nappies and re-usable green sack.	Comingled	67.48%

Torfaen CBC	Wheelie Bin	Fortnightly	No cost, no additional waste allowance	Blue bag: Card, Black box: Paper, Plastic, Cans, Foil & Glass	Comingled - separate card	63.61%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	Bags	Fortnightly	No cost, no additional waste allowance	Orange bag: Card. Blue bag: Plastic, Cans & Foil. White bag: Paper. Grey caddy for glass. Blue Reusable bag: mixed recycling Paper, Glass. Card, Plastic, Foil, Cans & Cartons	Hybrid	71.07%
Wrexham CBC	Wheelie Bin	Fortnightly	No cost, no additional waste allowance	Green box: Plastic & Cans, Blue Sack : Card & Paper, Black box: Glass	Kerbside Sort	68.92%

Appendix 2: (Reusable Recycling Sacks)

Technical / Operational Considerations: the types of bags considered all consist of a durable woven plastic as follows:

	<p>RCTs current reusable bag for green waste</p>	<p>450mm x 450mm x450mm (WxDxH) Handle on base for tipping retrieval. Rubber insert within base for increased durability.</p>
	<p>Sample bags provided by supplier. Currently used by Merthyr Council for the collection of Cans and Plastic.</p>	<p>450mm x 450mm x450mm (WxDxH) Handle on base for tipping retrieval. Top cover / flap with Velcro fastener. (Preferred option to protect paper and card).</p>
	<p>Sample bags provided by supplier. Currently used by Medway Council for the collection of dry mixed recycling very similar to RCT's current methodology.</p>	<p>350mm x 350mm x450mm (WxDxH) Handle on base for tipping retrieval. Rubber insert within base for increased durability. Top cover / flap with Velcro fastener.</p>

Trials were undertaken at Bryn Pica using the Council's existing reusable bags. The trials were limited to general observations regarding volume, weight, contamination and manual handling. Observations are summarised below.



Observations	Officer Comment
Volume	<p>During the test the contents of 5 current (single use) recycling bags was easily distributed with 2 of the Councils reusable bags. There was sufficient spare volume to pinch closed the top of the bags.</p>
Weights	<p>A total of 10 test iterations were carried out filling 2 reusable sacks with the contents of 5 randomly chosen recycling bags delivered to Bryn Pica. Weights in the range of 2.7kg to 5.4 kg were recorded. The average weight of the filled reusable sack was 3.8kg.</p> <p>Officers acknowledge that weights experienced at the kerbside could be significantly high if residents were to overfill with a particular waste type, particularly glass.</p>
Contamination	<p>The reusable bags did begin to soil up after the 10 test iterations. Soiling level will be dependent on the performance of individual households.</p>
Moisture Levels	<p>The impact on the quality of paper and card due to moisture ingress was not tested as part of this trial. Discussions with Amgen Officer have indicated a degree of caution in</p>

	<p>relation to any potential reduction in fibre quality. This can impact on rebates for recycling.</p>
<p>Recycling Yield</p>	<p>There is no evidence to suggest that a change to reusable sacks will increase the Council's overall recycling performance. Officers could envisage a slight reduction in overall yield of recycling as a result of lost bags barriers to replacement. Current single use bags offers the easiest method of participation with minimal barriers.</p>
<p>Collection Round Impact</p>	<p>No work has been undertaken in relation to the impacts such a change may have on pick rates, manual handling implications for recycling operative. This would need further testing.</p> <p>Officers do suspect a reduced pick rate at the kerbside due to the time is takes to deposit the contents of the reusable bag and then return it to the kerbside. This has been shown to the be the case in the recent change in green waste collection.</p>



Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity

Contact Officer

Appendix 4 (Feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

09 January 2023

Cabinet – 23rd January 2023

Re: Consultation response of Service Review of Waste Management Strategy

I have been instructed by this Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee to convey the comments and observations of Members in relation to the **Service Review of Waste Management Strategy**.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee gave feedback and comments on the proposals for revisions to the Council's Waste Management Strategy at its meeting on the 14 December 2022. The following points were raised:

- Members note the need to act now to ensure the Council meets future Welsh Government recycling targets and recognised the need to avoid financial penalties which would add to the financial challenges facing the Council over the medium term. Some members expressed concern that the proposals could initiate more fly tipping issues around the Borough and asked that if the proposals are taken forward that fly tipping is monitored and scrutinised. A majority of members however noted from the presentation received, that when RCTCBC went from weekly to fortnightly collections there was no direct correlation between the changes and an increase in fly tipping in the locality. Should any issues with fly tipping occur, officers stated that where they are able to evidence who was responsible the Council will also prosecute the offenders.
- All Members encouraged the Council to proactively communicate any changes in waste collections which may be implemented by the Council following the consultation, particularly to address public questions around how they are able to dispose of certain items such as animal waste, cat litter and clinical waste to ensure residents are aware of all the options available to them.
- The Committee commented that the current success in recycling rates in RCTCBC has been achieved through the process being a simple and easy one for residents to follow and they asked that this continued should any changes be taken forward. The Committee recommended more communication and education to support the process. They emphasised the significance of making the public aware of the importance of recycling and disposing of their waste correctly including potential fines for not reaching Welsh Government set targets for recycling in Wales. A majority of members noted that much of the public concern in respect of the changes related to a misunderstanding of the proposals and what can or cannot currently be recycled.

- As part of any future changes, a majority of members encouraged engagement with local supermarkets to encourage each retailer to take responsibility for soft plastics and other “returnable” items for recycling, to facilitate a reusing of items culture.
- Members recommended that the Council promote all recycling facilities, particular where residents have raised concerns around capacity issues through the consultation process, to reassure residents as part of any future decision upon these proposals.

At the conclusion of Committee’s discussions in respect of the proposals, members noted a wish to scrutinise the delivery of any changes to this service over the short to medium term.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christian Hanagan', written over a faint, light-colored circular stamp or watermark.

Christian Hanagan
Service Director Democratic Services and Communication

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM INCLUDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

(Revised March 2021)

Please refer to the current Equality Impact Assessment guidance when completing this document. If you would like further guidance please contact the Diversity and Inclusion Team on 01443 444529.

An equality impact assessment **must** be undertaken at the outset of any proposal to ensure robust evidence is considered in decision making. This documentation will support the Council in making informed, effective and fair decisions whilst ensuring compliance with a range of relevant legislation, including:

- Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010.

This document will also contribute towards our duties to create a More Equal Wales within the

- Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015.

The [‘A More Equal Wales – Mapping Duties’](#) guide highlights the alignment of our duties in respect of the above-mentioned legislation.

SECTION 1 – PROPOSAL DETAILS

Lead Officer: Roger Waters

Service Director: Steve Owen

Service Area: Waste Services

Date: 12/01/2023

1.a) What are you assessing for impact?

Strategy/Plan	Service Re-Model/Discontinuation of Service	Policy/Procedure	Practice	Information/Position Statement
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.b) What is the name of the proposal?

Revised Waste Management Strategy

1.c) Please provide an overview of the proposal providing any supporting links to reports or documents.

The proposal seeks to outline suggested revisions to the Council’s operational waste management processes with a view to considering future arrangements for the collection of household waster designed to aid an increase in the rate of recycling across RCT which will also deliver financial efficiencies.

The proposal recommends the following service changes:

1. That the collection of residual household waste changes from being a fortnightly service, with collections moving to 3-weekly.
2. To trial of the use of reusable recycling sacks for the collection of dry mixed recycling.

Regarding the move to 3-weekly collections, it is proposed that this move is accompanied by strict volume control measures, namely:

- (a) a maximum of 3 black bags per household, (for those properties with existing black bag waste collections),
- (b) The “no side waste” rule continues for those households with large 240L wheelie bin collections, (but 1 bag of side waste, no larger than 70L, is allowed for the standard 120L bins).

In relation to the trial of reusable recycling sacks, an initial assessment of the potential to move to using reusable sacks has been undertaken and there are many examples of Councils across the UK using reusable sacks for the collection of recyclable materials, as reusable bags are considered to be a more sustainable option than single-use plastic bags. Nevertheless, further investigations are required and so a trial, likely in 3 different areas across RCT, is proposed. The results of this trial would then inform a decision as to a way forward.

Following feedback from residents during a 5-week public consultation exercise, it is proposed to revise the Council’s operational waste management processes regarding future arrangements for the collection of household waste accordingly, plus conduct a trial of reusable recycling sacks.

Such revisions to the Council’s waste management strategy, including a trial of reusable recycling sacks, will take advantage of the annual Council tax reminder letters in order to promote the changes amongst residents and time will be set aside to prepare a clear and comprehensive communications campaign to introduce the service changes.

Moreover, once the changes have been introduced, recycling rates will continue to be monitored and evaluated to inform an ongoing strategy for waste and recycling collections.

- 1.d) Please outline where delivery of this proposal is affected by legislation or other drivers such as code of practice.

The Council, as a designated Waste Collection Authority, has a duty to collect household waste, under section 45 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, as amended (EPA 1990).

All Welsh Local Authorities work towards recycling targets set by Welsh Government and the next milestone target is for 2025 where 70% of waste collected must be recyclable. (Failure to reach these targets will result in the Council being issued with heavy financial penalties).

Additionally, the Council strategy; Making Rhondda Cynon Taf Carbon Neutral by 2030, contains an aspiration that the Council will go beyond the Welsh Government target of 70% and actually work towards achieving a recycling target of 80%.

1.e) Please outline who this proposal affects:

- Service users
- Employees
- Wider community

SECTION 2 – SCREENING TEST – IS A FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT REQUIRED?

Screening is used to determine whether the initiative has positive, negative or neutral impacts upon protected groups. Where negative impacts are identified for protected groups then a full Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Please provide as much detail as possible of how the proposal will impact on the following groups, this may not necessarily be negative, but may impact on a group with a particular characteristic in a specific way.

Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and foster good relations between different groups. Please take an intersectional approach in recognising an individual may have more than one protected characteristic.

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Age (<i>Specific age groups i.e. young people or older people</i>)	Negative	The proposal to move to 3-weekly refuse collections may mean that in areas with wheelie bin collections, the bins will be heavier to move containing 3 black bags, rather than 2.	As of the 2021 Census results published in January 2023, 47.3% of the population of RCT is resident in terraced housing.

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>In a similar vein, in areas where refuse is presented for collection in black bags without wheelie bins, carrying an additional bag to the kerbside may prove problematic for some.</p> <p>However, the Service will continue to support any affected residents with assisted bin collections and predict that this assistance may also be required with reuseable recycling sacks.</p> <p>Furthermore, awareness raising action will be undertaken by the Council with regards to the importance of recycling. This will benefit those worried about heavy or greater volumes of bags as a recent study by WRAP, (The Waste and Resources Action Programme), Cymru, highlighted that 39% of all black bag waste was organic material. If residents can be encouraged and educated to recycle more, it won't only benefit the</p>	<p>Population % by residence type: Terraced: 47.3% Semi-detached: 27.8% Detached: 16.5% Flats, part of converted building, commercial building or temporary structure: 8.4%</p> <p>In addition, with an increasing ageing population, more than 1 in 5 of all residents in RCT are aged 65 or over.</p> <p>The Service are aware of residents who require an assisted collection because of their age, mobility and other conditions that make it harder for them to take their waste to the kerbside or bin collection point, (and there are no relatives or neighbours who can help).</p> <p>Residents can also apply for an Absorbant Hygenie</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		environment but it will also mean less black bag waste, thus limiting any adverse impact of these service changes.	<p>Product, (AHP), collection or an additional black bag allowance if medical needs result in them needing to produce extra waste i.e stoma bags, absorbent bed sheets etc.</p> <p>The Council is proactively carrying out an "Up your Recycling Game" media campaign containing many different facets including Council Tax inserts, roadside banners, trailers, cinema adverts, etc.</p>
<p>Disability <i>(people with visible and non-visible disabilities or long-term health conditions)</i></p>	Negative	<p>The proposal to move to 3-weekly refuse collections may mean that in areas with wheelie bin collections, the bins will be heavier to move containing 3 black bags, rather than 2.</p> <p>In a similar vein, in areas where refuse is presented for collection in black bags without wheelie bins,</p>	<p>as of the 2021 Census results published in January 2023, 47.3% of the population of RCT is resident in terraced housing.</p> <p>Population % by residence type: Terraced: 47.3% Semi-detached: 27.8%</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>carrying an additional bag to the kerbside may prove problematic for some residents as they could find it difficult to move waste from their home to their bin collection point. This may be due to the weight of the bin / bag or the route may present physical and or sensory challenges to the resident.</p> <p>However, the Service will continue to support any affected residents with assisted bin collections and predict that this assistance may also be required with reuseable recycling sacks.</p> <p>Furthermore, awareness raising action will be undertaken by the Council with regards to the importance of recycling. This will benefit those worried about heavy or greater volumes of bags as a recent study by WRAP, (The Waste and Resources Action Programme), Cymru, highlighted that 39% of all black bag waste was organic</p>	<p>Detached: 16.5% Flats, part of converted building, commercial building or temporary structure: 8.4%.</p> <p>We do not yet have 2021 Census results for population health, but in the 2011 census 14.5% of the over-16 population of RCT declared disability or long-term illness that affected their daily life a lot, with a further 11.4% declaring disability or long-term illness that affected their daily life a little. In the 2019-20 National Survey for Wales, as reported through StatsWales, 35% of the 16+ population of RCT reported some form of long-term illness that limits their activities to some extent, with 20% reporting illness that limits their daily activity a lot.</p> <p>The Service are aware of residents who require an</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>material. If residents can be encouraged and educated to recycle more, it won't only benefit the environment but it will also mean less black bag waste, thus limiting any adverse impact of these service changes.</p>	<p>assisted collection because of their age, mobility and other conditions that make it harder for them to take their waste to the kerbside or bin collection point, (and there are no relatives or neighbours who can help).</p> <p>Residents can also apply for an Absorbant Hygienic Product, (AHP), collection or an additional black bag allowance if medical needs result in them needing to produce extra waste i.e stoma bags, absorbent bed sheets etc.</p> <p>The Council is proactively carrying out an "Up your Recycling Game" media campaign containing many different facets including Council Tax inserts, roadside banners, trailers, cinema adverts, etc.</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Gender Reassignment <i>(anybody who's gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex they were assigned at birth including non-binary identities)</i>	Neutral	No impact	The proposal outlines revisions to the Council's operational waste management processes 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, regardless of gender.
Marriage or Civil Partnership <i>(people who are married or in a civil partnership)</i>	Neutral	No impact	The proposal outlines revisions to the Council's operational waste management processes 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, regardless of marital status.
Pregnancy and Maternity <i>(women who are pregnant/on maternity leave)</i>	Neutral	No impact.	The Council offers weekly nappy collections with approximately 4,000

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			households currently registered for this service. This proposal does not affect the nappy collection service, which will remain weekly and open to anyone who registers for it and regularly presents nappies, baby wipes, etc for waste collection.
Race <i>(ethnic and racial groups i.e. minority ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers)</i>	Neutral	No impact.	The proposal outlines revisions to the Council's operational waste management processes 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, regardless of race.
Religion or Belief <i>(people with different religions and philosophical beliefs including people with no beliefs)</i>	Neutral	No impact.	The proposal outlines revisions to the Council's operational waste management processes for the collection of refuse and recycling designed to aid an

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			increase in the rate of recycling across RCT, which will also deliver financial efficiencies, regardless of religion or belief.
Sex <i>(women and men, girls and boys)</i>	Negative	Women / Girls. Disposed sanitary products will not be collected as frequently as previously.	By reducing household refuse collections from 26 collections per year to 18, waste products which cannot be recycled, such as sanitary products, will have to be stored in black bags for an additional week.
Sexual Orientation <i>(bisexual, gay, lesbian, straight)</i>	Neutral	No impact.	The proposal outlines revisions to the Council's operational waste management processes 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, regardless of sexual orientation.

In addition, due to Council commitments made to the following groups of people we would like you to consider impacts upon them:

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Armed Forces Community <i>(anyone who is serving, has served, family members and the bereaved)</i>	Neutral	No impact.	The proposal outlines revisions to the Council's operational waste management processes 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, regardless of whether a member of the Armed Forces Community or not.
Carers <i>(anyone of any age who provides unpaid care)</i>	Neutral	No impact.	The proposal outlines revisions to the Council's operational waste management processes 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, regardless of whether a Carer or not.

If the initial screening test has identified negative impacts then a full equality impact assessment (section 4) **must** be undertaken. However, if after undertaking the above screening test you determine a full equality impact assessment is not relevant please provide an adequate explanation below:

N/A

Are you happy you have sufficient evidence to justify your decision?

Yes

No

Name: Alistair Critchlow

Position: Head of Streetcare Services

Date: 12/01/2023

Please forward a copy of this completed screening form to the Diversity and Inclusion Team.

PLEASE NOTE – there is a separate impact assessment for Welsh Language. This must also be completed for proposals.

Section 3 Socio-economic Duty needs only to be completed if proposals are of a strategic nature or when reviewing previous strategic decisions. Definition of a ‘strategic nature’ is available on page 6 of the Preparing for the Commencement of the Socio-economic Duty Welsh Government Guidance.

SECTION 3 – SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY (STRATEGIC DECISIONS ONLY)

The Socio-economic Duty gives us an opportunity to do things differently and put tackling inequality genuinely at the heart of key decision making. Socio-economic disadvantage means living on a low income compared to others in Wales, with little or no accumulated wealth, leading to greater material deprivation, restricting the ability to access basic goods and services.

Please consider these additional vulnerable groups and the impact your proposal may or may not have on them:

- Single parents and vulnerable families
- Pensioners
- Looked after children
- Homeless people
- Students
- Single adult households

- People living in the most deprived areas in Wales
- People with low literacy and numeracy
- People who have experienced the asylum system
- People misusing substances
- People of all ages leaving a care setting
- People involved in the criminal justice system

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Low Income/<u>Income Poverty</u> <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i>	Neutral	No impact	The proposal outlines revisions to the Council's operational waste management processes 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, regardless of level of household income.
Low and / or No Wealth <i>(enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provisions for the future)</i>	Neutral	No impact	The proposal outlines revisions to the Council's operational waste management processes 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, regardless of level of household wealth.
<u>Material Deprivation</u> <i>(unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken</i>	Neutral	No impact.	The proposal outlines revisions to the Council's operational waste management processes for the collection of refuse and

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<i>electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.)</i>			recycling designed to aid an increase in the rate of recycling across RCT, which will also deliver financial efficiencies, regardless of any household material deprivation.

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<p><u>Area Deprivation</u> <i>(where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport))</i></p>	Neutral	No impact.	<p>The proposal outlines revisions to the Council's operational waste management processes 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.</p> <p>The move to 3-weekly refuse collections will be applicable across all areas with existing fortnightly refuse collections, regardless of area deprivation.</p> <p>Additionally, the Council's Waste contractor, Amgen Cymru, will continue to operate Community Recycling Centres across RCT, open 7 days a week at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ty Amgen Community Recycling Centre, Llwydcoed, Aberdare, CF44 0BX - Ferndale Community Recycling Centre, North Road, Ferndale, CF43 4RS

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dinas Community Recycling Centre, Cymmer Road, Dinas, CF39 9BL - Treforest Community Recycling Centre, Taffs Fall Road, Treforest Industrial Estate, CF37 5TT - Llantrisant 100% Recycling Centre, Pant-Y-Brad Road off Heol-Y-Sarn, Llantrisant Industrial Estate, CF72 8YT - Treherbert Community Recycling Centre, Treherbert Industrial Estate, Treherbert, CF42 5HZ <p>There are also 3 Council re-use shops in operation across RCT, which provide additional recycling and re-use facilities to residents.</p>
<p>Socio-economic background (social class i.e. parents education, employment and income)</p>	Negative	<p>Concerns have been expressed that decreasing the frequency of refuse collections negatively impacts larger households.</p> <p>Additionally, residents living in dwellings such as flats and small terraced housing may find the storage of refuse for an extra to be problematic.</p>	<p>Refuse is currently collected every 2 weeks with those residents living in black bag collection areas being permitted a maximum of 2 bags per collection. Moreover, residents living in areas with wheelie bin collections either have 240L bins or standard 120L bins with a "no side waste rule" in place.</p>

			<p>Under the proposals for a move to 3-weekly collections, the ratio of black bags per week remains the same, moving to a maximum of 3 bags per collection. However for areas with wheelie bin collections, those with standard 120L bins will be permitted 1 additional side waste bag.</p> <p>In addition, the majority of waste, (DMR, food waste, AHP/Nappies, green waste, bulky collections, etc.), will continue to be collected at current frequencies as set out below, so the storing of black bags will be minimal as most household waste is collected weekly. Awareness raising initiatives will be undertaken as part of the roll-out of the proposals to aid in residents' understanding of those items household waste can be recycled, (i.e. the majority of household waste).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dry Mixed Recycling – weekly collections
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Waste – weekly collections • Green Waste – weekly (reduced collections during winter months) • AHP/Nappies – residents can register for regular collections • Bulky Waste – by appointment (chargeable). <p>Further, the Council also offers an Additional Bag Allowance option for residents who are struggling with the waste allowances, i.e. those that produce a lot of daily waste that cannot be recycled, and this process is currently under review.</p>
<p>Socio-economic disadvantage <i>(What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)</i></p>	Negative	Some residents without access to private vehicles or the ability to drive may already feel socio-economically disadvantaged, with a consequence of this meaning they may have difficulty in being able to readily access the Council's Community Recycling Centres.	<p>The Council's Waste contractor, Amgen Cymru, operate Community Recycling Centres spread right across RCT , open 7 days a week, to be as easily accessible and in close a proximity to as many communities as possible. CRCs are located at:</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ty Amgen Community Recycling Centre, Llwydcoed, Aberdare, CF44 0BX- Ferndale Community Recycling Centre, North Road, Ferndale, CF43 4RS- Dinas Community Recycling Centre, Cymmer Road, Dinas, CF39 9BL- Treforest Community Recycling Centre, Taffs Fall Road, Treforest Industrial Estate, CF37 5TT- Llantrisant 100% Recycling Centre, Pant-Y-Brad Road off Heol-Y-Sarn, Llantrisant Industrial Estate, CF72 8YT- Treherbert Community Recycling Centre, Treherbert Industrial Estate, Treherbert, CF42 5HZ <p>Such an extensive provision of these facilities compares very favourably with the provision of such sites in neighbouring Local Authorities with existing fortnightly collections, moving to 3-weekly collections.</p> <p>There are also 3 Council re-use shops in operation across RCT, which provide additional</p>
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			recycling and re-use facilities to residents, in Aberdare, Llantrisant and Treherbert.
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SECTION 4 – FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

You should use the information gathered at the screening stage to assist you in identifying possible negative/adverse impacts and clearly identify which groups are affected.

- 4.a) In terms of disproportionate/negative/adverse impacts that the proposal may have on a protected group, outline the steps that will be taken to reduce or mitigate the impact for each group identified. **Attach a separate action plan where impacts are substantial.**

Protected Characteristics - Sex, (Women and girls).

Disposed sanitary products will not be collected as frequently as previously - no impact mitigation or reduction.

- 4.b) If ways of reducing the impact have been identified but are not possible, please explain why they are not possible.

It is not currently possible to recycle such waste. Therefore, disposed sanitary products should continue to be placed in the household refuse waste stream, which the Council is proposing to move to collect 3 weekly in due course.

- 4.c) Give sufficient detail of data or research that has led to your reasoning, in particular, the sources used for establishing the demographics of service users/staff.

- 4.d) Give details of how you engaged with service users/staff on the proposals and the steps taken to avoid any disproportionate impact on a protected group. Explain how you have used feedback to influence your decision.

The Let's Talks Waste consultation was conducted in-house and ran from the 5th December 2022 and ended on the 9th January 2023.

An online Let's Talk project was developed, which included background information, helpful links, videos and a survey to enable people to be informed and give their views.

The project was promoted online through social media; an email was also sent to key stakeholders to promote the project and encourage participation and a telephone consultation option was in place, through the Council's contact centre. Overall, approximately 4,000 responses were received to the consultation.

1) Respondents were informed that the projected budget savings for this change would be £800,000 in running costs per year and significantly reduce its annual carbon footprint. Such savings could then be diverted to safeguard other key Council services such as social care or education.

People were asked if they would support a change in black bag/wheelie bin collection frequency if it safeguarded other key services: would you support a change in black bag/wheelie bin collection frequency, if it safeguarded other key services?

2) Respondents were asked if they supported the proposed change in frequency of black bag/wheelie bin waste collections across the County Borough to three weekly: the Council is proposing to change the frequency of black bag/wheelie bin waste collections to 3 weekly (saving £800,000 per year). Do you agree with the proposal?

In order to increase recycling rates to the 70% target, a move to 3 weekly collections will need to be supported by the continuation of the existing waste limits which is currently 2 black bags per fortnight, (the equivalent of 1 black bag per week) and would move to 3 black bags or a closed wheeled bin every 3 weeks.

3) Respondents were asked if they supported this approach: is this something your household could support?

4) Furthermore, respondents who said that they had a pet were asked how they dispose of their waste: if you have a pet, how do you dispose of their waste?

5) Finally, respondents were informed that the Council purchases 30.2 million single use bags during a year at a cost of £867k. This is despite the Green Waste recycling service now utilising a re-usable Green sack and saving around 3 million bags per annum. We all know that we must reduce the use of single-use plastic wherever possible in our daily lives for the sake of our

People were asked if they would support a change to a reusable recycling sack and if their household would be able to store and use reusable sacks.

Having collated feedback to the 5 areas listed above, the following themes became apparent:

- Existing wheelie-bins not being sufficient in size to store waste for up to 3 weeks.
- The potential for increased fly-tipping due to longer waits between collections.

- Concerns over possible increases in vermin due to the smell and hygiene issues if waste is left for 3 weeks.
- Queries around the storage and disposal of hutch waste and cat litter.
- The collection of clinical waste.
- A feel that the moving to 3-weekly refuse collections represented a reduction in service, which should mean reduced Council tax.

4.e) Are you satisfied that the engagement process complies with the requirements of the Statutory Equality and Socio-economic Duties?

Yes

No

SECTION 5 – MONITORING AND REVIEW

5a) Please outline below how the implementation of the proposal will be monitored:

The proposals will be monitored by conducting regular operational reviews of how any change to refuse collection frequency is working in practice.

The Streetcare Communications group as well as the Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure will also review the proposals to ensure residents receive all the information they require to continue to recycle their waste.

5b) When is the evaluation of the proposal due to be reviewed?

The proposals will be reviewed in conjunction with a communications campaign in the lead-up to a proposed launch date of the changes, and the proposals will continue to be reviewed thereafter.

5c) Who is responsible for the monitoring and review of the proposal?

The Streetcare Communications Group monitor and report significant findings to the Director of Frontline Services.

5d) How will the results of the monitoring be used to develop future proposals?

Findings from the public consultation have been used to inform a way forward with respect to changing the frequency of refuse collections and trials of reusable recycling sacks and whether communications are relevant and helpful.

SECTION 6 – REVIEW

As part of the Impact Assessment process all proposals that fall within the definition of ‘Key Decisions’ must be submitted to the Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your proposal is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.

If this proposal is a Key Decision please forward your impact assessment to Councilbusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk for a Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. The EqIA guidance document provides more information on what a Key Decision is.

It is important to keep a record of this process so that you can demonstrate how you have considered equality and socio-economic outcomes. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below

Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 7 of the Cabinet report noted that there’s limited negative impacts but given the consultation responses, there are various negative impacts which need to be highlighted. • Section 9 of the Cabinet report doesn’t relate to responses to protected characteristics and needs to highlight and mitigate the negative/neutral impacts. • Age & Disability are highlighted as a neutral impact. There is a need for authenticity/transparency and to recognise that these are negative impacts and that there are mitigations in place. 	12/01/2023	Section 7 of Cabinet Report amended. Section 9 of Cabinet Report amended. Age & Disability protected characteristics element of EIA amended. Census 2021 information about health etc to be added. Sections 6 and 7 of EIA completed Impact upon larger families and small terraced housing and flats referenced in Section 3 of the EIA re: Socio-Economic Duty.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 76 of Review Panel bundle – There’s no longer a register of disability. There is an opportunity to reflect what the census asks about ill health etc. • Page 94 of Review Panel bundle – There is a need to complete Sections 6 (this needs to be reflected in the Cabinet report) and 7. • It was noted that the impact on flats/small terraces and larger families may not have been addressed, which was a recurring theme in the consultation responses and particularly links with Socio-Economic Duty. 		
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was recognised that the consultation report was not finalised but noted the lack of information under protected characteristics and the need to recognise and mitigate the negative impacts. • It was noted that the Waste proposals had the biggest Let’s Talk Survey response in two years. Officers were encouraged to read through all consultation comments to ensure each has been addressed, as individuals could pick this up. 	12/01/2023	<p>Consultation Report to be finalised</p> <p>Consultation Comments duly considered with feedback themes addressed in draft Cabinet Report and EIA</p>

SECTION 6 – SUMMARY OF IMPACTS FOR THE PROPOSAL

Provide below a summary of the impact assessment. This summary should be included in the equality and socio-economic impact section of the Cabinet report template. The impact assessment should be published alongside the report.

The Equality Impact Assessment has been reviewed and updated to include mitigated risks following the conclusion of the public consultation period.

There are 5 negative and 12 neutral equality and diversity implications associated with this report.

The 5 negative impacts relate to the protected characteristics of Age, Disability and Sex, plus Socio-economic background and Socio-economic disadvantage.

These negative impacts will be mitigated by a range of actions as detailed in the impact assessment above.

SECTION 7 – AUTHORISATIONS

Lead Officer: S Owen

Name: Steve Owen

Position: Service Director - Streetcare

Date: 16/01/2023

I recommend that the proposal:

- Is implemented with no amendments
- Is implemented taking into account the mitigating actions outlined
- Is rejected due to disproportionate negative impacts on protected groups or socio-economic disadvantage

Head of Service/Director Approval: R J Waters

Name: Roger Waters

Position: Director - Frontline Services

Date: 16/01/2023

Please submit this impact assessment with any SLT/Cabinet Reports.

WELSH LANGUAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOL

This Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIS) tool enables RCT Council to consider the principles and requirements of the [Welsh Language Standards \(No.1\) Regulations 2015](#) to ensure compliance with the [Welsh Language \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#).

Stage 1 – Information Gathering	
NOTE: As you complete this tool you will be asked for evidence to support your views . Please see Welsh Language Impact Assessment Guidance for more information on data sources.	
Proposal Name:	Revised Waste Management Strategy
Department	Frontline Services
Service Director	Steve Owen
Officer Completing the WLIA	Alistair Critchlow
Email	alistair.critchlow@rctcbc.gov.uk
Phone	07881 268186
Brief Description	<p>The proposal seeks to outline suggested revisions to the Council's operational waste management processes with a view to considering future arrangements for the collection of household waste designed to aid an increase in the rate of recycling across RCT which will also deliver financial efficiencies.</p> <p>The proposal recommends the following service changes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the collection of residual household waste changes from being a fortnightly service, with collections moving to 3-weekly.

	2. To trial of the use of reusable recycling sacks for the collection of dry mixed recycling.
Date	January 2023
Please outline who this proposal affects? (Service Users, Employees, Wider Community)	Employees and the Wider Community.
What are the aims of the policy, and how do these relate to the Welsh Language?	The aim of the proposal is to adopt changes and innovations to the Council's refuse and recycling collection services in order to help achieve operational efficiencies, financial savings and improvements in recycling performance.
Who will benefit / Could the policy affect Welsh language groups? If so, list them here.	There are no Welsh language implications.
Current linguistic profile of the geographical area(s) concerned	<p>The Office for National Statistics, (ONS), undertakes an Annual Population Survey, which, in Wales, collects information about respondents' Welsh speaking ability and includes a question on how often people speak Welsh. The most recent Annual Population Survey, for the quarter ending December 2021, reported that 20.9% of respondents living in the County Borough said they could speak Welsh, this is compared to the "all Wales" percentage of 29.5% of respondents.</p> <p>Recently released 2021 Census figures regarding the Welsh language show that the anticipated increase in Welsh speakers across Wales as a whole has not been realised. The all-Wales figures showed a decrease in the percentage of Welsh speakers to 17.8% percent. There was a small increase in RCT, however – the percentage of our population who can speak Welsh increased from 12.3% to 12.4%, and we saw a 2.8% increase in the number of Welsh speakers in the county borough (from 27779 to 28556). RCT was also one of only for LAs in Wales to see an increase in the percentage of Welsh speakers – the others were Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan and Merthyr Tudful, all neighbouring county boroughs, which could demonstrate that our region is seeing some positive trends in terms of increases in Welsh speakers, and that there may be a resulting increase for services through the medium of Welsh. As further, more detailed data from the Census becomes available for RCT (e.g. LSOA data), we will need to consider how it may impact the services we provide.</p>

Other relevant data or research	N/A

Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

In this section you need to consider the impact, the evidence and any action you are taking for improvement. This is to ensure that the opportunities for people who choose to live their lives and access services through the medium of Welsh are not inferior to what is afforded to those choosing to do so in English, in accordance with the requirement of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

Please note there is a separate impact assessment for Equality and Socio-Economic duty that must also be completed for policy proposals.

Remember that effects that are positive for some groups could be detrimental to others - even among Welsh language groups. Consider the effects on different groups. For example, a proposal may be beneficial to Welsh learners, but not to Welsh speakers.

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
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<p>Opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language</p> <p>e.g., staff, residents and visitors</p> <p>The rights of Welsh speakers and learners to use Welsh when dealing with the council and for staff to use Welsh at Work</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>All promotional and awareness raising correspondence will continue to be published in Welsh with the Welsh appearing first.</p> <p>Future recruitment will focus on recruiting Welsh speakers to increase face-to-face Welsh language service provision.</p> <p>As there are currently only 4% of staff within the Service area with Welsh language skills of level 3 or above, (the level at which speakers likely have sufficient skills to use the language more extensively at work), recruiting more Welsh speakers would have a positive impact on the service’s Welsh provision, and the Council’s attempts to promote the language.</p> <p>Moreover, in light of recent guidance from the Welsh Language Commissioner, the Council has a statutory duty not only to mitigate negative impacts, but to maximise any possible positive impacts too.</p>	<p>All promotional and awareness raising materials shows Welsh language appearing first.</p> <p>The Council’s Welsh Language Skills Strategy aims to ensure the percentage of staff with Welsh language skills is at a similar level.</p> <p>Recently released 2021 Census figures regarding the Welsh language show that the anticipated increase in Welsh speakers across Wales as a whole has not been realised. The all-Wales figured showed a decrease in the percentage of Welsh speakers to 17.8% percent. There was a small increase in RCT, however – the percentage of our population who can speak Welsh increased from 12.3% to 12.4%, and we saw a 2.8% increase in the number of Welsh speakers in the county borough (from 27779 to 28556). RCT was also one of only for LAs in Wales to see an increase in the percentage</p>	<p>Ensure that, upon each new order of promotional material, all correspondence is reviewed, and bilingualism retained.</p> <p>Encourage contact in Welsh by incorporating an appropriate additional line into correspondence, e.g., “we welcome correspondence in Welsh, which will not lead to a delay in responding”.</p> <p>Ensure steps are taken for basic relevant Welsh lessons for those who need it with the aim of further upskilling and training as appropriate.</p> <p>Investigate opportunities to ensure there are a number of Welsh-speaking members of staff on the team through advertising some new posts as “Welsh-essential” roles <i>where practical to do so</i>.</p>
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			<p>of Welsh speakers – the others were Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan and Merthyr Tudful, all neighbouring county boroughs, which could demonstrate that our region is seeing some positive trends in terms of increases in Welsh speakers, and that there may be a resulting increase for services through the medium of Welsh. As further, more detailed data from the Census becomes available for RCT (e.g. LSOA data), we will need to consider how it may impact the services we provide.”</p> <p>Current linguistic profile of the Service area: - Level 0 = 36% Level 1 = 54% Level 2 = 4% Level 3 = NIL Level 4 = NIL Level 5 = 4%</p>	
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Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>Numbers and / or percentages of Welsh speakers e.g. Welsh Medium Education / Study Opportunities. Links with the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Strategy / RCTCBC Five Year Welsh Language Strategy</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>Existing staff are being encouraged to begin Welsh language lessons and continue on their language journey</p> <p>Another of the Welsh Language Commissioner's key areas of focus currently is increasing the use of Welsh in the community, (increasing the opportunities for people to use the language/creating favourable conditions for its use are also key themes of the Government's Cymraeg 2050 strategy, with which our forthcoming 5-year Welsh language Promotion Strategy is aligned).</p>	<p>All staff on Level 0 undertake online Level 1 training, (2-hour online course), plus one member of the team has recently completed a Welsh language Foundation Course with the University of South Wales.</p> <p>RCTs 5-year strategy requires the Council to increase Welsh language skills of our workforce. In addition, the Welsh Government Cymraeg 2050 strategy wants a million Welsh Speakers by 2050.</p>	<p>Staff to take Welsh language lessons / courses.</p> <p>Ensure a positive contribution is made towards the goals of local / national Welsh language strategies.</p> <p>Recruiting Welsh speakers will contribute to creating this environment and would increase opportunities to use the Welsh language.</p>

<p>Opportunities to promote the Welsh language e.g. status, use of Welsh language services, use of Welsh in everyday life in work and in the community</p> <p>Actively encourage and promote the use of our services in Welsh to see an increase in demand over time</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>All promotional activities will be provided bilingually.</p> <p>Welsh Language Services to be included at the beginning of the design process to ensure any consultation campaign “slogans” can have a Welsh version.</p>	<p>Bilingual promotional materials will be available when publicising service changes.</p> <p>Welsh Language Services will be engaged with accordingly.</p> <p>Consultation correspondence available bilingually.</p>	<p>Review promotional materials when engaging with residents in order to ensure compliance with Welsh Language Standards.</p> <p>Ensure good communication and meaningful consultation with Welsh Language Services.</p> <p>Regularly evaluate procedures and systems to ensure constant provision of an end-to-end Welsh language service.</p>
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Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>Compliance with the Council's Statutory Welsh Language Standards <u>e.g.</u> increasing or reducing the Council's ability to deliver services through the Medium of Welsh.</p> <p>Consider the rights of Welsh speakers to use Welsh when dealing with the Council and for staff to use Welsh at Work</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>Any media promotions and correspondence as part of publicising service changes will be bilingual and will comply with the relevant Welsh Language Standards guidance.</p> <p>Any new contracts or tenders will ensure all relevant Welsh Language Standards are listed in the documentation to ensure compliance from the outset, (in case of any system development / new system implementation).</p>	<p>Bilingual media releases will be published.</p> <p>New contract documentation will be available should the Council obtain new products – e.g. reusable recycling sacks.</p>	<p>Review material to be published when engaging with residents in order to ensure compliance with Welsh Language Standards.</p> <p>Review any new contract documentation to ensure compliance with Welsh Language Standards.</p> <p>If the service change results in reduction of staffing numbers, reasonable priority should be given to retain Welsh speaking staff.</p>

<p>Treating the Welsh language, no less favourably than the English language</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>All service communications, whether via letter, website or telephony is bilingual, with Welsh text first or to the left of English text.</p>	<p>Promotional materials, website and all subsequent correspondence available bilingually.</p>	<p>Regularly evaluate correspondence to ensure that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language.</p>
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Stage 3 - Strengthening the proposal

Having listed actions in section 2 which may mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts – please record below which ones you will imbed into the policy proposal and who will be responsible for them.

Also consider is the proposal necessary? Would it be possible to meet demand without any new developments? Could other existing provision be used? Where should the development be?

What are you going to do?	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible?
Encourage staff to take Welsh language lessons to improve the linguistic profile across the whole team. (Factoring this into the team's workload, basic Welsh language lessons will be provided during working hours, and free of charge).	Ongoing	The Service Manager
Encourage contact in Welsh by incorporating an appropriate additional line into correspondence, e.g., "we welcome correspondence in Welsh, which will not lead to a delay in responding".	Ongoing	The Service Manager

If ways of reducing the impact have been identified but are not possible to implement, please explain why. Give sufficient detail of data or research that has led to your reasoning.

What was identified?	Why is it not possible?

Stage 4 – Review

As part of the Welsh Language, Equalities and Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment Process all proposals that fall within the definition of Significant Key Decision should present at the Officer Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your report is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.

If this proposal is a Key Strategic Decision please forward your impact assessment to CouncilBusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk for an Officer Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. [See our guidance document](#) for more information on what a Significant Key Decision is.

For all policy proposals, whether it is a Significant Key Decision or not you are required to forward this assessment to Welsh Language services in the first instance for some initial guidance and feedback.

It is important to keep a record of this process so that we can demonstrate how we have considered and built in sustainable Welsh language considerations wherever possible. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below

Welsh Language Services Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Welsh Language Services feedback
Impact on Welsh language is minimal due to the nature of the service. Nevertheless, any service change proposals should consider Welsh language skills among remaining staff, affording more opportunities to learn and utilise their Welsh language skills both at work and in the community.	22/11/22	
Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation

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Stage 5 – Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing

How and who will you monitor the impact and effectiveness of the proposal?

With specific regard to the recommendations set out in the Cabinet Report, the service change proposals will be subject to frequent monitoring and interaction throughout their planning, introduction and subsequent operation.


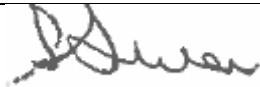
Stage 6 – Summary of Impacts for the Proposal

Provide below a summary of the impact assessment. This summary should be included in the Welsh Language Considerations section of the SLT/Cabinet report template. The impact assessment should be published alongside the report.

A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been completed and the main findings are as follows -

There are no direct Welsh language implications as a result of the recommendations in this report. However, although the recommendations in relation to the collection of waste do not have any direct impact on the Welsh language, opportunities for the service to maintain, grow or upskill Welsh speaking staff should remain a priority.

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Stage 7 – Sign Off			
Name of Officer completing the WLIA	Alistair Critchlow	Service Director Name:	Steve Owen
Position	Head of Streetcare Services	I recommend that the proposal: (Highlight decision)	Is implemented with no amendments
			Is implemented taking into account the mitigating actions outlined
			Is rejected due to disproportionate negative impacts on the Welsh language
Signature		Service Director Signature	
Date	09/01/2023	Date	16/01/2023



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23rd JANUARY 2023

SERVICE REVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY MEALS SERVICE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND WELSH LANGUAGE, COUNCILLOR RHYS LEWIS

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Cabinet on the outcome of the recent consultation in respect of the proposals for the future of the Council's Community Meals Service.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the information contained within the attached Consultation Report (Appendix 1), which includes feedback received from the online survey, emails and telephone calls, the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 14th December 2022 (Appendix 2) and the frequently asked questions posted out to service users (Appendix 3).

- 2.2 Consider and agree the preferred service change option moving forward, in respect of the Community Meals Service:

Option 1: to continue the service as it currently operates with increased service user charges thus reducing the subsidy per meal.

Option 2: to reorganise the existing internal service with increased service user charges thus reducing the subsidy per meal.

Option 3: to reorganise the existing internal service and provide a hot/frozen Community Meal Home Delivery Service with increased service user charges thus reducing the subsidy per meal.

Option 4: to cease the current service and support service users to find alternative options.

- 2.3 Delegates authority to the Director of Education and Inclusion Services, in consultation with the Director of Human Resources, to undertake and conclude necessary actions to implement the preferred option.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council is facing significant financial challenges into the medium term and is considering the remodelling of key service areas to contribute to addressing the shortfall in funding.
- 3.2 To continue to provide a revised Community Meals Service to ensure the availability of a hot meal to support our vulnerable residents in RCT.
- 3.3 To ensure the process for progressing any changes is undertaken efficiently and effectively in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 At the meeting of the Cabinet held on 29th November 2022, Members considered a report from officers on options and the rationale for considering alternative ways of meeting the nutritional needs of the most vulnerable members of our communities.
- 4.2 The report set out the results from a review process and outlined four options for consideration for the future delivery of the service.

Option 1: to continue the service as it currently operates with increased service user charges thus reducing the subsidy per meal.

Option 2: to reorganise the existing internal service with increased service user charges thus reducing the subsidy per meal.

Option 3: to reorganise the existing internal service and provide a hot/frozen Community Meal Home Delivery Service with increased service user charges thus reducing the subsidy per meal.

Option 4: to cease the current service and support service users to find alternative options.

- 4.3 Following consideration, approval was given to initiate a consultation on the preferred service change proposal of Option 3, together with the other options, in respect of the Community Meals Service.
- 4.4 The meals are currently distributed to service users in their homes by 28 delivery staff using 14 vehicles. Once a preferred option is decided upon, and demand for the service is established, the service will undertake a robust review

of delivery rounds to ensure that the routes are the most efficient and cost effective with the aim of reducing fuel costs and our carbon emissions.

5. RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The consultation report, prepared in respect of this proposal, is attached in Appendix 1. It contains a summary of the online survey responses, emails and telephone calls received during the consultation period and, where required, the appropriate clarification to any issues raised.
- 5.2 The consultation process resulted in 416 responses being received via the online survey, which was available for the duration of the consultation period on the Council’s website, and a total of 6 emails and a few telephone calls to the contact centre regarding the consultation.
- 5.3 In addition, a meeting was held with Community Meals staff and their Trade Union representatives on 23rd November 2022, to explain the proposals and allow staff to ask any questions and participate in the consultation process.
- 5.4 Out of the 416 responses received; Table 1 summarises respondents’ views on the proposals. However, not all respondents answered on all options presented.

Table 1: Respondents’ Views on the Four Proposals				
Option	No. of Respondents	Yes (Agree)	No (Disagree)	Do Not Know
1	392	269 (68.6%)	88 (22.4%)	35 (9%)
2	368	105 (28.5%)	184 (50.0%)	79 (21.5%)
3	394	112 (28.4%)	267 (67.8%)	15 (3.8%)
4	375	6 (1.6%)	353 (94.1%)	16 (4.3%)

- 5.5 The main themes emerging from the consultation process are:

Overall, 67.8% of respondents disagree with the preferred Option 3. The level of disagreement was higher for service users (76.4%) than those respondents who said they were members of the public (53.5%), with 42.4% of the public respondents agreeing with the preferred option.

- There was general disagreement with the option due to reasons such as the cost-of-living crisis, vulnerability and isolation of service users and a frozen meal being cooked rather than a prime cooked meal.
- A large number of comments stated the importance of a hot freshly cooked meal for older people using the service.
- Respondents suggested that many of the service users would not be able to heat up a meal themselves, as it could be dangerous, as some service users do not have the capability or may forget. However, it must be noted that Option 3 offers service users a hot meal and no service users will have to heat their own meals up unless they choose to receive a frozen meal to be consumed at their discretion and convenience.

- There were mixed views on the price increase. The general feeling from those who disagreed was that the price increase was not value for money or too much of an increase, given the current cost-of-living crisis. However, several respondents felt that the increase was reasonable, especially if it helped maintain the service. In the event of service users facing financial hardship, staff will continue to highlight Cost of Living support and advice from the Welsh Government and UK Government, which can be found on the Council's website (<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ConsumerAdviceandMoneyMatters/CostofLivingSupport/CostofLivingSupport.aspx>) and GOV.UK website, e.g. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. This information will be included in the letter sent to service users advising them of the outcome of the consultation and the preferred option for the future of the Community Meals Service and on the Council's website.
- Several relatives of service users suggested that the proposal would impact on family members who would have to step in to help. However, as highlighted in the above third bullet point, the frozen meals will be cooked and delivered hot to service users. They would be supported in the same way as they currently receive a hot meal, although it is acknowledged that the meal will be a frozen cooked meal.

5.5.1 Overall, 81.0% of respondents stated that they would prefer a delivered hot meal, with 91.2% being service users. Those respondents who were members of the public were more likely to agree to receiving a mixture of both hot and frozen meals (50.0%), than service users themselves (7.2%). Also, respondents indicated that they would prefer a prime cooked meal to be delivered rather than a frozen cooked meal.

5.5.2 A total of 60.7% of respondents said they would not be able to store and cook a frozen meal by themselves, or if they could, they would need to be supported by a relative, neighbour, family or carer. The highest proportion stating this were staff members (88.9%), but it should be noted that only 8 staff members responded no to this question in the survey, so the sample is not representative of the majority of staff. However, as explained in paragraph 5.6, the frozen meal will be cooked and delivered as normal to service users and there will be no need for service users to struggle to cook or store their meal. Support will also be provided to plate the meal for service users.

5.5.3 Overall, 57.3% of respondents, of which 66.9% were service users, said they would continue to use the proposed hot or frozen meal delivery service. This could result in a reduction of service take-up and, as a consequence, there would be a negative impact on the level of subsidisation required.

5.5.4 Some of the respondents commented that the service provided more than a meal and a number of the service users relied on the social interaction and support of the Council staff who deliver the meals, especially those who have no family. This support will continue under the preferred option, which is Option 3, to ensure the health and well-being of service users is checked.

- 5.5.5 Overall, 68.6% of respondents agreed with Option 1 and thought it should have been the preferred option, with 79.7 % of service users, 73.6% of relatives and 73.5% of staff agreeing with this position. A number of respondents suggested that they would be happy with an increase in cost to keep the service as it is. Other comments mainly focused on the need to retain the status quo for the service or not to increase charges.
- 5.5.6 In total, only 28.5% of respondents agreed with Option 2, with 30.1% of service users in agreement. Although, 37.0% of staff respondents did agree with Option 2. As with Option 1, respondents suggested that the service should continue as it is, with some happy to pay more. There were also some concerns expressed as to the impact on staff, including redundancy.
- 5.5.7 The vast majority of all respondents (94.1%) disagreed with Option 4.

Benefits and Implementation of the Preferred Option

- 5.6 Option 3 allows the Council to retain an affordable Community Meals Service, which is competitive in price, maintains social contact with service users and offers delivery of either a hot or frozen meal.
- 5.7 In comparison, four Welsh Local Authorities provide a similar Community Meals Service to Option 3, whereby meals are bought in and regenerated, and the price per meal (2 courses) ranges from £4.50 to £5.15. In addition, a further 15 Welsh Local Authorities do not provide a Community Meals Service, and in some instances, service users are signposted to an external provider that provides a frozen meal delivery service only, where a typical price per meal (2 courses) is more than £5.00.
- 5.8 A hot meal will continue to be delivered by Community Meals staff to service users' homes Monday to Friday, between 11.30am and 2.00pm. The daily visit will provide that all important social interaction and welfare check, which will reduce the impact of loneliness for some service users who have no family or where family are unable to assist, providing peace of mind and reassurance. Assistance will also be provided to plate the meal, where this is required.
- 5.9 Continuation of the service will enable and empower service users to remain supported in their own home, maintaining their independence and providing a balanced diet. Dietary and allergen needs will continue to be met.
- 5.10 Additional flexibility will be offered with the choice of having a frozen meal delivered, which can be heated at a time most suitable to the service user.
- 5.11 In order to implement the preferred Option 3, all current service users will need to be notified of the proposed change. This will include a written letter of communication to each service user and their carer(s), where relevant, explaining the revised option available to them. In addition, the Council's website will be updated and provide details of the preferred option, including frequently asked questions.

- 5.12 Adaptations to the existing central kitchen will be programmed to redesign the food storage and preparation areas. This will result in an increase in freezer capacity, a picking area, trolley storage area and installation of appropriate regeneration warming ovens in readiness for the delivery service.
- 5.13 Existing redundant equipment will be recycled to existing school premises.
- 5.14 New Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point documentation and food preparation will need to be completed and approved by Environmental Health. This would require new kitchen food safety critical control procedures and microbiological testing of the purchased prepared meals, specifically through the frozen meal picking stage and hot holding delivery stage.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was prepared and has been reviewed and updated to include further mitigated risks following the consultation. This is attached in Appendix 4 (and an accompanying action plan at Appendix 4i). This document outlines the proposal in further detail in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010.
- 6.2 There are 8 negative and 9 neutral equality and diversity implications associated with this report. These risks will be mitigated by a range of actions as detailed in the impact assessment.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been prepared and provides further detail in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. The outcome of this assessment is provided in Appendix 5.
- 7.2 There are no negative or adverse Welsh Language implications associated with this report.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Consultation period commenced on 5th December 2022 and ended on 9th January 2023.
- 8.2 849 recipients of the Community Meals Service were posted a letter, informing them of the options, a survey to complete and some frequently asked questions to assist them with any queries they may have. A freepost address was available for return of the survey. The frequently asked questions can be viewed in Appendix 3.
- 8.3 The online survey was also available on the Council's website for anyone to complete for the duration of the consultation period. A consultation email address and telephone number were also available for enquiries.

8.4 A meeting was held with all Community Meals staff, who could attend, and their Trade Union representatives to explain the options and allow them to ask any questions. There were concerns that contingency plans would need to be put in place if only one driver is in operation, the risk of finding a service user who needs medical attention and the quality and option of the frozen meals, which will need to be reviewed.

8.5 In addition, staff expressed their concerns about job losses and requested consideration be given to redeployment for those who did not secure a post in any proposed new structure or elected for voluntary redundancy. The Director of Education and Inclusion Services commented that every effort would be made to support employees who would be keen to secure alternative employment in Catering Services where at all possible.

9. **SCRUTINY ENGAGEMENT**

9.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was provided with an opportunity on the 14th December 2022 to consider the proposed changes to the service and provide feedback and comments. The feedback can be viewed in Appendix 2.

10. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 A summary of the estimated financial implications of each option is set out in Table 2.

Table 2: Financial Implications of Service Review Options			
Option	Estimated Total Annual Revenue Savings (£'000)	2022/23 Budgeted Subsidy Per Meal (£)	Estimated Subsidy Per Meal (£)
1. Current Status Quo Level of Service with Increased Service User Charges	63 – 190	5.07	4.65 – 3.65
2. Reorganised Service Delivery with Increased Service User Charges	362 – 489	5.07	2.28 – 1.28
3. Hot/Frozen Community Meal Delivery Service with Increased Service User Charges	427	5.07	1.73
4. Cease to Deliver an In-House Service	546	5.07	0

10.2 In addition, where no appropriate redeployment opportunities are identified, redundancy costs will need to be met by the Council.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 11.1 There is no legislative requirement to deliver a Community Meals Service. However, in considering this report the Council needs to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The Act and accompanying Part 4 Code of Practice sets out where a Local Authority has carried out an assessment, which has revealed that if a person has care and support needs then the Local Authority must decide if those needs meet the eligibility criteria and, if they do, access to services that meet those needs must be offered.
- 11.2 Any employment issues that arise will need to be considered in conjunction with Human Resources, and in accordance with any relevant policies and legislative provisions.

12. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 12.1 This proposal is aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference 2020-2024' and the priority 'Ensuring people: ***are independent, healthy and successful***'.
- 12.2 In addition, the report considers one of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 wellbeing goal of: A Healthier Wales and a society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised.

13. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

- 13.1 This applies to all electoral wards.

14. CONCLUSION

- 14.1 Members are asked to consider the contents of the attached Consultation Report and give officers approval to progress with their agreed preferred option, as outlined in section 2 of this report.

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
23rd JANUARY 2023

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN
DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH
PARTICIPATION AND WELSH LANGUAGE, COUNCILLOR RHYS LEWIS**

Item: SERVICE REVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY MEALS SERVICE

Background Papers

Service Review of the Community Meals Service Report to Cabinet on 29th
November 2022.

<https://rctcbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s38377/Service%20Review%20of%20the%20Community%20Meals%20Service.pdf?LLL=0>

Officer to contact:

Andrea Richards, Service Director of 21st Century Schools and Transformation

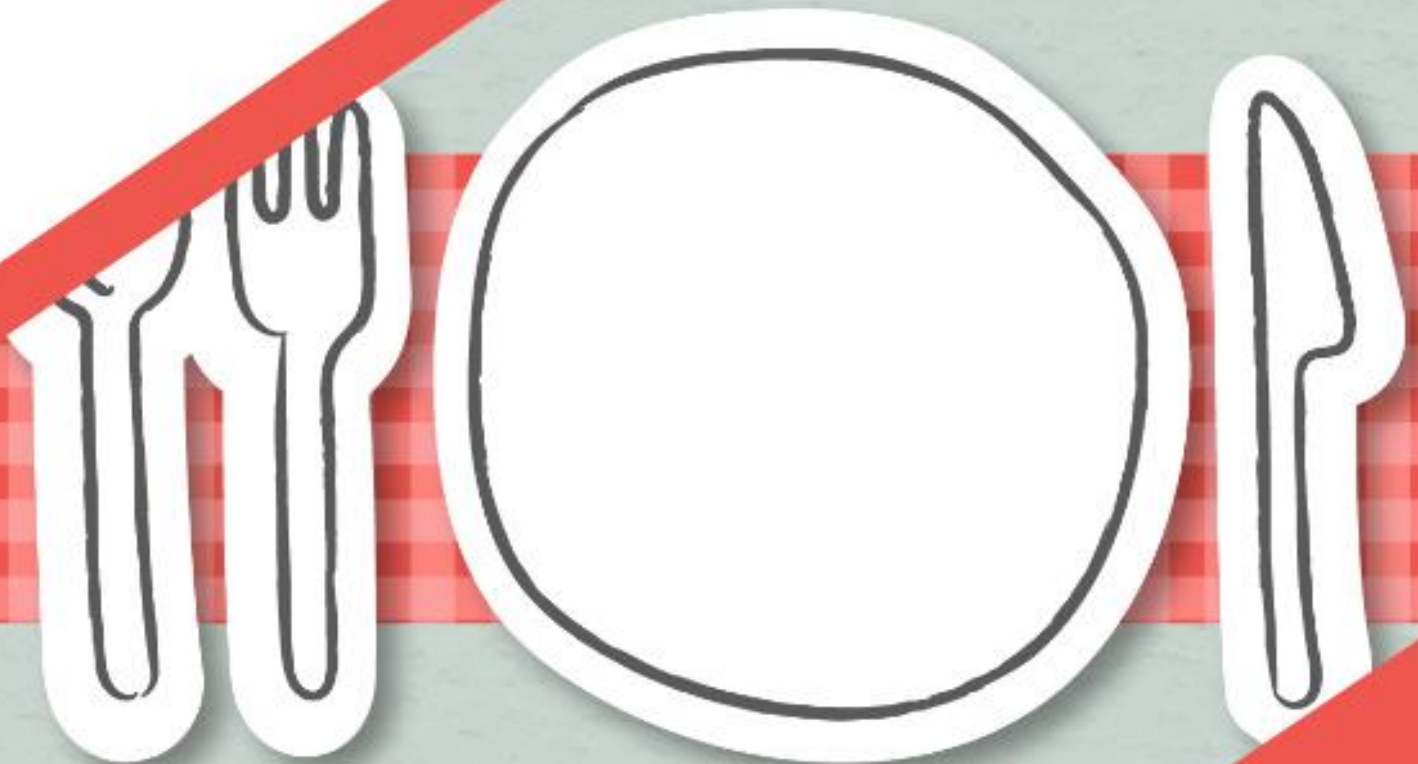
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Let's talk
RCT

COMMUNITY MEAL SERVICES (MEALS ON WHEELS)

Consultation Report

Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC

January 2023



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report presents the findings of the Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) consultation.
- The consultation was conducted in-house. The consultation period ran from the 5th December 2022 and ended on the 9th January 2023.
- Views were sought on a number of proposed options for the future of the Community Meals Service.
- The following methods were used to consult with stakeholders:
 - A letter was sent to all service users (849)
 - FAQ sheet delivered to all service users.
 - 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.
 - Freepost option for returns.
- The majority of respondents were service users or relatives/friends of service users (61.4%).
- Overall, the majority of respondents disagree with the preferred option 3 (67.8%). The levels of disagreement are higher for service users (76.4%), than those respondents who said they were members of the public (53.5%), with 42.4% of the public respondents agreeing with the preferred option.
- Respondents were asked to comment if they disagreed with Option 3 and comments other than general disagreement, stated the importance of hot fresh meals for older people using the service and suggested that many of the service users would not be able to heat up a meal themselves.
- Respondents were asked if they had any comments in relation to the proposal to increase the price of a meal by £0.50. The general feeling from those who disagreed was that the price increase was not worth it or too much of an increase, given the current cost of living. A number of respondents felt that the increase was reasonable, especially if it helped keep the service going.
- Respondents were asked if they would prefer a delivered hot meal or a frozen meal that could be heated at a time to suit the service user. Overall, 81.0% of respondents stated that they would prefer a hot meal, 91.2% of service users. Those respondents who were members of the public were more likely to agree with a mixture of both (50.0%), than service users themselves (7.2%).
- When asked if they would be able to store and cook a frozen meal by themselves or if they would need to be supported by a relative, neighbour, friend or carer, 60.7% of respondents said they would not be able to do this by themselves, with the highest proportion stating this being staff (88.9%).

- Overall, the majority of respondents said they would continue to use the service (57.3%), with 66.9% of service users saying that they would.
- Respondents were asked how the recommended proposal option 3 would impact them or their families. The themes identified included, some of the respondents reported that the service provided more than a meal and a number of the service users relied on the company and support of the Council staff who deliver the meals, especially those who had no family. The inability of some of the service users to heat up their own meals was reiterated.
- The majority of respondents agreed with option 1 and thought it should have been the preferred option (68.6%), with 79.7% of service users agreeing, 73.6% of relatives and 73.5% of staff. Of the comments received on option 1, a number suggested that they would be happy with an increase in cost to keep the service as it is.
- Overall, only 28.5% of respondents agreed with option 2, with 30.1% of service users in agreement.
- Respondents were asked if option 4 should have been the preferred option. The vast majority of all respondents disagreed with option 4, overall, 94.1% disagreed.
- Overall, 416 responses were received to the consultation survey and 6 emails were received.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) 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 survey.
- 1.5 Section 5 presents the feedback received from a number of emails.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council is facing significant financial challenges and is considering the remodelling of key service areas to contribute to the shortfall in funding. In response to rising inflation, food and energy costs, and the financial pressures faced by the Council this year and beyond, the Community Meals Service has been assessed and there is a need to consult on the proposed options for the future of the Service.
- 2.2 A review of the service has been undertaken and several options for the future of the service have been evaluated and were put out for consultation;

The Preferred Option for Consultation: Option 3 - Hot/Frozen Community Meal Delivery Service with Increased Service User Charges

This option would consist of reorganising the existing Community Meals Service to provide service users with a choice of either a hot or frozen meal delivery service, depending on their preference. This will allow the Council to continue to provide a hot meal service and maintain that important contact with service users. In addition, a frozen meal service will allow flexibility to service users to choose and heat their meal when they want, rather than being restricted to a delivery time. 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 option would require less staff to deliver the service

Option 1: Continue the existing service as it currently operates with increased service user charges

This option would continue to provide the existing Community Meals Service as it currently operates, which produces a prime cooked meal, with proposed increased service user charges of either £0.50, £1.00 or £1.50 per meal.

Option 2: Reorganise the existing service with increased service user charges

This option would consist of reorganising the existing Community Meals Service, which produces a prime cooked meal, with proposed increased service user charges of either £0.50, £1.00 or £1.50 per meal. This option would require less staff to deliver the service.

Option 4: Cease to Deliver an In-house Community Meals Service

This option would consist of ceasing the current service and supporting service users to find alternative options.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The Community Meals consultation was conducted in-house and ran from the 5th December 2022 and ended on the 9th January 2023. This section presents the methodology which was utilised to promote and collect the data.
- 3.2 The consultation used an online survey which was built using Snap XMP. The survey aimed to gain feedback on the proposals.
- 3.3 A printed format of the survey along with a letter and FAQ sheet was sent to each of the 849 service users, with a freepost address available for return, as well as the option to return the forms to the Community Meals drivers.
- 3.4 To ensure wide outreach and involvement of the wider 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.
- 3.5 Respondents were encouraged to write in using a dedicated email address consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk, in order to allow them to share their views. Overall, there were a total of 6 emails/letters received from the public relating to the consultation.
- 3.6 A telephone consultation option was in place, 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 The proposals were presented and discussed at the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 14th December 2022.
- 3.8 Overall, 416 survey responses and 6 emails were received to the consultation.

4 Questionnaire Results

- 4.1 The following section outlines the results from the online and paper questionnaires, which received 416 responses. A selection of comments were 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 a service user, relative, carer, member of the public or staff. The table below shows that the majority of respondents were service users or relatives/friends of service users (61.4%).

Note: the tables that include type of respondent do not add up to 100% as this was a multiple response question. The base is the total number of respondents, some of whom will have provided more than 1 response.

Table 1: Respondents

Counts Analysis % Respondents	
Base	402 100.0%
Are you:	
A service user of Community Meals (Meals on Wheels)?	152 37.8%
A relative / neighbour / friend of a Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) user?	95 23.6%
A carer of a Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) user?	26 6.5%
A member of the public?	100 24.9%
A member of staff?	35 8.7%
None of the above?	10 2.5%

Option 3

- 4.3 Respondents were asked whether they agreed with a number of options, including the preferred option 3.

The Preferred Option for Consultation: Option 3 - Hot/Frozen Community Meal Delivery Service with Increased Service User Charges

This option would consist of re-organising the existing Community Meals Service to provide service users with a choice of either a hot or frozen meal delivery service, depending on their preference, allowing the Council to continue to provide a hot meal service and maintain important contact with service users. In addition, a frozen meal service would allow flexibility to service users to choose and heat their meal when they want, rather than being restricted to a delivery time.

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 option would require less staff to deliver the service

Table 2: Agreement with Option 3

Counts Analysis % Respondents	Total	Do you agree with option 3?		
		Yes (agree)	No (disagree)	Do not know
Base	394	112 28.4%	267 67.8%	15 3.8%
Are you:				
A service user of Community Meals (Meals on Wheels)?	148	30 20.3%	113 76.4%	5 3.4%
A relative / neighbour / friend of a Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) user?	94	26 27.7%	65 69.1%	3 3.2%
A carer of a Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) user?	26	8 30.8%	16 61.5%	2 7.7%
A member of the public?	99	42 42.4%	53 53.5%	4 4.0%
A member of staff?	34	9 26.5%	24 70.6%	1 2.9%
None of the above?	9	3 33.3%	6 66.7%	- -

- 4.4 Overall, the majority of respondents disagree with the preferred option 3 (67.8%). The levels of disagreement are higher for service users (76.4%), than those respondents who said they were members of the public (53.5%), with 42.4% of the public respondents agreeing with the preferred option.

Comments Option 3

- 4.5 Respondents were asked to comment if they disagreed with Option 3 and the following are the main themes that emerged:

General Disagreement

“This is privatising the service - eventually quality will suffer, prices will rise and rise. You have decimated the home care service by going to outside sources, the same will happen here. The "important " contact with service users will be reduced to deliveroo! Continuity is important, the current service does far more than deliver a meal. When prices rise, users will stop ordering and then you will have poor”

“Cost of living crisis is causing people to suffer enough and now the council are denying the vulnerable a hot meal. Vile”

“I’m a relative of one of your clients and I think it’s disgraceful on what you’re doing. these vulnerable people want something warm and freshly made inside in this extreme cold weather not this rubbish frozen foods what your offering... You really need to look on what you’re doing here ..I’m sure you can save money somewhere else..”

“It’s disgusting and disappointing that you think this is an OK way to treat anybody let alone our most vulnerable.”

“My gosh that’s crazy. That physical appearance every day is so important to those living on their own. When caring for a family member. I knew someone would call on them in between my visits and the amount of times they called me because they were not happy with something, I was so grateful. I knew I could have my own lunch and take a break and knew someone else would take the responsibility of dishing out the food. Small act but huge in a carers eyes...”

“This is ridiculous, this is for old people who are not able to cook for themselves. These people rely on this service and older people don’t like change. Why would you want to change something that has worked for so many years. All the council wants to do is make money the council don’t care about other people lives and how it will affect them not only the older people but the people who run this and do a damn good job at it.”

Hot fresh meals

- 4.6 A large number of comments stated the importance of hot fresh meals for older people using the service:

“A frozen meal can be bought for £1.00 in Iceland? We want fresh meals not frozen”

“A hot frozen meal is nothing compared to a freshly cooked hot meal for our vulnerable and elderly”

“As a member of staff, I know first-hand that the clients don't like, or want the frozen meals. Many don't have a microwave and some not even an oven. The purpose of this service was to provide a freshly cooked meal daily. A frozen meal can be bought for just over £1, at many supermarkets. To expect them to pay £ 4.55 for one is disgraceful”

“Because I feel fresh food for the elderly is a much better option old people do not like the frozen food if this option 3 goes ahead there will be no more meals on wheels because people won't have them”

“Do not like the frozen meals otherwise I would buy them from a store”

“A Frozen meal option is not feasible as the frozen meals themselves are not value for money compared with other frozen meals available by other providers also the frozen meals provided by meals on wheels are not a good quality product and are not popular among the service users.....”

Needs help with Cooking

- 4.7 Respondents suggested that many of the service users would not be able to heat up a meal themselves, as it could be dangerous, as some service users do not have the capability to cook or may forget.

“A lot of customers are unable to do their own meal prep, the workers of meals on wheels do it for them. Most customers like they're delivery times as a lot of the older generation forgot to eat so by having regular delivery's that make sure to eat correctly”

“A lot of these service users rely on a hot meal as they are unable to cook themselves. If you are going to serve a frozen meal & then they are left to cook it, a lot of them are unable to see or use the microwave. Or if you mean cook the frozen meal your end this meal would end up bring re heated twice as some of the meals are delivered way before lunchtime. A lot of service users rely on this service because they haven't got anyone to support them with this task.”

“I need a hot meal every day, I can't use a microwave to warm a hot meal”

"I strongly disagree with this decision because I totally rely on a freshly cooked meal every day, if I don't fancy eating it when it arrives I know I can reheat it later, I would not be able to reheat a frozen hot meal. Keep it as it is."

"My Dad is 84 who suffers with Dementia / Alzheimers, Diabetic amongst other conditions. He cannot operate the microwave and wouldn't remember where the food was kept. I work full time and therefore my dad wouldn't have anything to eat until late evening. Once a frozen meal is cooked it cannot be re-heated. This service is a lifeline to my dad. Surely cuts from top management instead of vital services to the elderly and the vulnerable."

"Well for one not a lot of elderly people I know can afford to use their ovens and quite a few I know either don't own or know how to work a microwave. I have 2 relatives that use this service, my great aunt who is 97 and my uncle who is 71 and they both heavily rely on this service. They get a nice hot meal and they're ready for when it arrives. If they had a frozen one then that would mean using precious money and energy to heat them up, which quite frankly neither of them have much of....."

Price Increase

- 4.8 Respondents were asked if they had any comments in relation to the proposal to increase the price of a meal by £0.50.

The general feeling from those who disagreed was that the price increase was not worth it or too much of an increase, given the current cost of living:

"50p too much of an increase"

"Cost of living for elderly is already tough. Some won't be able to afford this"

"Not worth it for a frozen meal"

"The frozen meals are not worth the Increase. As a frozen meal can be bought cheaper from a supermarket"

"Too expensive"

"This is vital for my mother to have a meal midday but 50p per meal= £3.50 increase each week. That is a huge rise when on a pension. With everything else going up"

"Price increase is not acceptable to services users on a low income"

- 4.9 A number of respondents felt that the increase was reasonable, especially if it helped keep the service going, comments included:

"50p is reasonable"

"Fair increase of 50p - 1.00"

“Happy to pay £1.50 more”

“I understand the necessity. It won't affect my mother she will pay the increase to continue to have a freshly cooked meal and the daily social contact from the lovely ladies who deliver them”

“In my opinion the increase is fair giving the cost of living and the price of everything going up”

“The proposed increase would be fine if it were a fresh meal most fresh cooked meals are priced higher i.e., carvery however for a frozen microwave meal you could go to any shop and pick up meals for £1”

Type of Meal

- 4.10 Respondents were asked if they would prefer a delivered hot meal or a frozen meal that could be heated at a time to suit the service user. Overall, 81.0% of respondents stated that they would prefer a hot meal, 91.2% of service users.

Those respondents who were members of the public were more likely to agree with a mixture of both (50.0%), than service users themselves (7.2%).

Table 3: Preferred option of food delivery

Counts Analysis % Respondents	Total	If you are a service user, would you prefer a delivered h...		
		Hot	Frozen	Mixture of Both
Base	279	226 81.0%	4 1.4%	49 17.6%
Are you:				
A service user of Community Meals (Meals on Wheels)?	125	114 91.2%	2 1.6%	9 7.2%
A relative / neighbour / friend of a Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) user?	75	62 82.7%	1 1.3%	12 16.0%
A carer of a Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) user?	24	21 87.5%	- -	3 12.5%
A member of the public?	48	23 47.9%	1 2.1%	24 50.0%
A member of staff?	14	12 85.7%	- -	2 14.3%
None of the above?	6	5 83.3%	- -	1 16.7%

- 4.11 Service users were then asked if they would be able to store and cook a frozen meal by themselves or if they would need to be supported by a relative, neighbour, friend or carer. Overall, 60.7% of respondents said they would not be able to do this by themselves, with the highest proportion stating this being staff (88.9%).

Table 4: Responses to food storage methods

Counts Analysis % Respondents	Total	If you are a service user, would you be able to store and...		
		Yes (agree)	No (disagree)	Do not know
Base	270	84 31.1%	164 60.7%	22 8.1%
Are you:				
A service user of Community Meals (Meals on Wheels)?	127	45 35.4%	79 62.2%	3 2.4%
A relative / neighbour / friend of a Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) user?	75	19 25.3%	51 68.0%	5 6.7%
A carer of a Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) user?	24	5 20.8%	16 66.7%	3 12.5%
A member of the public?	42	15 35.7%	17 40.5%	10 23.8%
A member of staff?	9	1 11.1%	8 88.9%	- -
None of the above?	6	2 33.3%	3 50.0%	1 16.7%

- 4.12 Service users were asked if they would continue to use the proposed hot or frozen meal delivery service. Overall, the majority of respondents said they would continue to use the service (57.3%), with 66.9% of service users saying that they would.

Table 5: Responses to users' preference of hot or frozen meal

Counts Analysis % Respondents	Total	If you are a service user, would you continue to use the ...		
		Yes (agree)	No (disagree)	Do not know
Base	260	149 57.3%	69 26.5%	42 16.2%
Are you:				
A service user of Community Meals (Meals on Wheels)?	127	85 66.9%	27 21.3%	15 11.8%
A relative / neighbour / friend of a Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) user?	71	41 57.7%	19 26.8%	11 15.5%
A carer of a Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) user?	23	7 30.4%	11 47.8%	5 21.7%
A member of the public?	38	18 47.4%	12 31.6%	8 21.1%
A member of staff?	7	3 42.9%	3 42.9%	1 14.3%

None of the above?	6	3 50.0%	- -	3 50.0%
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- 4.13 Finally on option 3, the respondents were asked how the recommended proposal would impact them or their families.

The themes identified included:

Social Interaction

- 4.14 Some of the respondents reported that the service provided more than a meal and a number of the service users relied on the company and support of the Council staff who deliver the meals, especially those who had no family.

“... I believe that if frozen meals are introduced as a weekday service in my opinion the Mow service will eventually shut down and that would be a disaster for the elderly that so rely on a hot meal and someone calling every day!”

“Some of our clients only see us workers and look forward to seeing our faces and chat....”

“The impact of some people do not see the delivery person might have an effect on their wellbeing”

“They would need family help to reheat, some don’t have family”

“If the service was to close they’d lose the 1 to 1 conversion and a regular home cooked meal and more pressure to family to provide that when most work full time”

Elderly/Disability:

- 4.15 The inability of some of the service users to heat up their own meals was reiterated here.

“I cannot read the cooking instructions on the label as they are too small. Would have to rely on someone else to cook and prepare my meal”

“It would....require someone to reheat. Therefore, If service user is disabled, they would have to wait for carer to come to reheat”

“Living alone my relative relies heavily on the hot meal service, it’s imperative that this service isn’t removed if they are to continue living independently. The only alternative would be a care home with no family living nearby to assist with meals”

“Some people sadly don't have a choice and would have to find a way to warm their own meal...some people don't have anyone to rely on and look forward to a warm meal provided to them”

“There will be no one calling in to Mam every lunchtime. She does not like the frozen meals. The reason she has the meals is she is physically unable to prepare a hot meal for herself.”

“The cost will impact but as I work my mother 96 lives alone so has no choice and is dependent on this mid-day meal that arrives hot as my mother is too frail to heat herself.”

“My mother forgets there is frozen meals. The fresh are out on the side for her. She remembers them when they are on the side for her. Many weekends when I'm away the frozen are still in her freezer.”

Increased Burden on Friends & Family:

- 4.16 A number of relatives and service users suggested that the proposal (preferred option 3) would impact upon family members who would have to step in to help.

“.....I don't have to rely on family for meals, my family work, got their own families I can't expect them to cook and why should I worked all my life payed my tax's and now the old age are forgotten about”

“Family member depends on having a hot meal due to being unable to move freely around their home easily this means they would have to wait for family members to get home from work which isn't always the same times”

“I cannot read the cooking instructions on the label as they are too small. Would have to rely on someone else to cook and prepare my meal”

“It would highly impact myself and my family as I would have to work my FULL time job to come home and cook a FRESH meal for my grandparents as I will not accept them eating frozen meals provided by yourselves which would mean me doing more whereas now I rest easy knowing they have had a freshly cooked meal every day.”

Option 1

Option 1: Continue the existing service as it currently operates with increased service user charges

This option would continue to provide the existing Community Meals Service as it currently operates, which produces a prime cooked meal, with proposed increased service user charges of either £0.50, £1.00 or £1.50 per meal.

- 4.17 Respondents were asked if option 1 should have been the preferred option. The majority of respondents agreed with option 1 and thought it should have been the preferred option (68.6%), with 79.7% of service users agreeing, 73.6% of relatives and 73.5% of staff.

Table 6: Agreement with option 1

Counts Analysis % Respondents	Total	Do you think this should have been the preferred option?		
		Yes (agree)	No (disagree)	Do not know
Base	392	269 68.6%	88 22.4%	35 8.9%
Are you:				
A service user of Community Meals (Meals on Wheels)?	148	118 79.7%	18 12.2%	12 8.1%
A relative / neighbour / friend of a Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) user?	91	67 73.6%	16 17.6%	8 8.8%
A carer of a Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) user?	26	14 53.8%	8 30.8%	4 15.4%
A member of the public?	99	51 51.5%	38 38.4%	10 10.1%
A member of staff?	34	25 73.5%	6 17.6%	3 8.8%
None of the above?	10	4 40.0%	5 50.0%	1 10.0%

Increase price for service to continue:

- 4.18 Of the comments received on option 1, a number suggested that they would be happy with an increase in cost to keep the service as it is.

“A pound increase is OK”

“A price rise in hot fresh meals is understandable. It’s obvious anyone would chose a hot fresh meal over an overpriced frozen”

“Everyone knows about price rising so a rise in a hot fresh meal delivered and put on a plate for users that have no family members is well worth it”

I fully support the above option if we have to pay more then so be it.

“I would only continue to use the service if it was a 50p increase. I could not afford an increase of £1.50 per meal.”

Service should be free or continue as is:

- 4.19 Other comments mainly focussed on the need for the service to stay as it is now or to not increase charges.

“As previously stated, this service should be free, or very heavily subsidised.”

We have to be careful about the amount of increase due to the cost of living standards for all

“Currently having meals delivered is working well, family members and members of the public have less hassle and you know that they are having a nice hot meal through this cold weather. Some of the service users need to have a hot meal as they have no options to heat their meals”

“I think this should stay as it is as it is a vital service for many people.”

The current operation of meals on wheels has been brilliant for years, whoever wants to change it that person/people, are very silly. Maybe if their family relied on this service they would understand better

This current system works well for both service users and work force so why change it!

“Having paid national insurance contributions my whole life, and full council tax, I believe this is a service that the council should provide.”

Option 2

Option 2: Reorganise the existing service with increased service user charges

This option would consist of reorganising the existing Community Meals Service, which produces a prime cooked meal, with proposed increased service user charges of either £0.50, £1.00 or £1.50 per meal. This option would require less staff to deliver the service.

4.20 Respondents were asked if option 2 should have been the preferred option.

Overall, only 28.5% of respondents agreed with option 2, with 30.1% of service users in agreement. Although 37.0% of staff respondents did agree with option 2.

Table 7: Agreement with option 2

Counts Analysis % Respondents	Total	Do you think this should have been the preferred option?		
		Yes (agree)	No (disagree)	Do not know
Base	368	105 28.5%	184 50.0%	79 21.5%
Are you:				
A service user of Community Meals (Meals on Wheels)?	136	41 30.1%	64 47.1%	31 22.8%
A relative / neighbour / friend of a Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) user?	93	25 26.9%	42 45.2%	26 28.0%
A carer of a Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) user?	26	3 11.5%	16 61.5%	7 26.9%
A member of the public?	92	19 20.7%	59 64.1%	14 15.2%
A member of staff?	27	10 37.0%	13 48.1%	4 14.8%
None of the above?	10	8 80.0%	1 10.0%	1 10.0%

4.21 As with the previous option comments mainly suggested that the service should continue as it is, with some respondents happy to pay more.

Happy to pay more

“Again I’m happy paying more for my meal”

“I agree perhaps some changes need to be made due to costs but not the actual meal.”

"I would rather pay more to have fresh cooked food than frozen meals. The elderly looked out for us and it's our turn to look out for them."

- 4.22 With option 2 there were some concerns as to the impact the proposal would have on staff, including any potential for redundancy.

Concerns for Staff

"Again vital service and shouldn't impact staff"

"Again why is it front line service staff and the service users have to suffer. It is so wrong."

"I do not agree with existing staff being made redundant life is difficult"

"If increase is same cost for option1 and 2 then I don't see why staff should be cut"

"Less staff should not be considered at a time of such financial difficulty"

"Do not want the service to lose staff or hours"

"I do not support the reduction in staff some people who live alone rely on this as the only form of human contact each day."

Option 4

Option 4: Cease to Deliver an In-house Community Meals Service

This option would consist of ceasing the current service and supporting service users to find alternative options.

- 4.23 Respondents were asked if option 4 should have been the preferred option. The vast majority of all respondents disagreed with option 4, overall, 94.1% disagreed.

Table 8: Agreement with option 4

Counts Analysis % Respondents	Total	Do you think this should have been the preferred option?		
		Yes (agree)	No (disagree)	Do not know
Base	375	6 1.6%	353 94.1%	16 4.3%
Are you:				
A service user of Community Meals (Meals on Wheels)?	136	- -	126 92.6%	10 7.4%
A relative / neighbour / friend of a Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) user?	94	3 3.2%	90 95.7%	1 1.1%
A carer of a Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) user?	26	1 3.8%	25 96.2%	- -
A member of the public?	94	1 1.1%	89 94.7%	4 4.3%
A member of staff?	31	- -	31 100.0%	- -
None of the above?	10	1 10.0%	8 80.0%	1 10.0%

- 4.24 Comments included:

Against this option:

“100 percent don't want this option at all family member have had for yrs plus the delivery girls provide a social care when delivery meal”

“Absolutely shocking, not only do the elderly receive a hot meal, they also know someone is coming in daily to make sure they're OK.”

“Ceasing the current service would have a significant impact on members of the public and in particular those that are high risk of falls, decreased function and hospital discharges”

“Definitely not this option should never be considered as this service is essential for the elderly that are not capable.”

“Definitely not This service is vital to many, the only people they see and a hot meal. Some don't have the facilities to warm meals or even the ability/health to do so. One warm meal a day for some, is a 'life saver!'”

“During covid 19 these meals became vital to a lot of people whose family couldn't get to them and also people who couldn't get out themselves and have continued to be a support going on enabling families not worrying because they know they are having a warm notorious meal and are being checked up on”

Any Other Comments

- 4.25 The following are a selection of comments received and mainly mirrored the comments that had already been made.

Keep the Service as it is/Service should continue

“There is a need for the service but should be cost effective for the authority and consistent to those receiving the meals.”

“You can't stop this hot meal service, what have the elderly got left !!!!”

“Please consider leaving the service at the existing option as this service is essential for the elderly.”

“We need to ensure that these provided meal continues, even at a slight increase.”

“Would be Happy with a price increase”

“Keep it to as it is and if that means charging a little extra then so be it.”

“I am prepared to pay the extra cost for delivery of hot meal”

“Vulnerable Service Users/Loneliness”

“I would think it would panic some users with withdrawal of service!!”

“Not only does meals on wheels provide food but they also provide company and they check on their customers. Many customers don't have family to rely on so this service is important”

“Please consider leaving the service at the existing option as this service is essential for the elderly.”

“The elderly and infirm that access this service sometimes the delivery ladies are the only people they see all day. Please don’t forget the elderly in particular in this Borough need to be taken care of”

“This service is a vital and important community service provided locally for elderly and vulnerable people some of who only see the meals on wheels staff and no one else from day to day. This service is a vital lifeline in enabling people to stay within their own homes and also an important service to people while recovering from operations and illnesses. It would be a devastating loss to our communities if this service is ended”

Make Cuts to other Services/Managers

“Cut from top management!”

“Maybe cutting jobs from higher up, with huge salaries could save a very important service.”

“There are plenty of other savings that can be introduced by RCT look around for gods sake”

About you

4.26 Under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, the Council has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. Respondents were asked how the proposals affect you because of?:

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Ethnicity
4. Disability
5. Sexuality
6. Religion / belief
7. Gender identity
8. Relationship status
9. Pregnancy
10. Preferred language

The following are a selection of the comments received.

Impact due to age and disability comments:

“As I’m getting older myself it’s quite scary to think that the elderly and disabled in our community will be just brushed aside with for some no human contact I understand the cost of such a service but what about the cost to service users it’s not just money it’s the wellbeing, the human contact, if only for that short few minutes a day”

“As the daughter I'd be expected to visit mam more often to sort out food. Getting older myself and having my own disabilities as well as caring responsibilities for my husband this would put a lot of extra pressure on me. I cannot afford to give up my own job and neither could my brother with whom I share the care of our mother.”

“Any decisions under this consultation would impact Elderly and the disabled..”

“Disabilities. any increase cost will impact greatly on me as it is costly just to be disabled, as I need to pay to help to clean home and need to pay for walking apparatus.”

“My husband and I are severely disabled and these meals provide a life line for us both. Please do not pull this service.”

“... I am aged 90+ and I have mobility issues”

“Age - older people are less able to pay more for the service due to their fixed income”

- 4.27 With regards to the proposals, and the impact it may have, respondents were asked how they could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive, Negative or Neutral) and if, in any way, it treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language? How neutral effects could become positive, how positive effects could be increased, or negative effects be decreased?

The comments received for the above 2 question have been made available to officers for the development of the associated impact assessments.

5 Letter and Email Responses

5.1 The following section outlines a summary of the comments from emails received.

5.2 A total of 6 emails were received and a number of calls to the contact centre regarding the consultation, summaries of which are shown below.

- The verbal feedback from the clients is that they do not want frozen meals, they want freshly cooked, homemade type of food, made with passion. They only have the frozen meals on the weekend because they feel they have no other option.
 - Cut the outrageous number of lower managements, and more senior management to a more proportionate level.
 - I believe that it is unfair to increase the price of the hot meal provided, in this time of austerity. It could force the most vulnerable to cancel the service. I am really against it and would prefer the service runs as it has been (if not more efficiently).
 - Meals on Wheels service. wanted to discuss how it would be a shame if it was discontinued, has objections to frozen meals, fully understand the prices. suggests that the desert could be scrapped to save.
-

Appendix 2: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

6 January 2023

Cabinet – 23rd January 2023

Re: Consultation response of Review of Community Meals Service

I have been instructed by this Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee to convey the comments and observations of Members in relation to the **Review of the Community Meals Service**

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee gave feedback and comments on the preferred service change proposal in respect of the Community Meals Service at its meeting on the 14 December 2022. The following points were raised:

- A majority of committee Members were supportive of Option 3 (*to reorganise the existing internal service and provide a hot/frozen Community Meal home delivery service with increased service user charges thus reducing the subsidy per meal*) in general but did express concern at the reduction in staff members and asked that this does not affect the time that is spent with the service user when delivering meals. Members commented that a number of service users did not just utilise this as a delivery service, but it was also used as a wellbeing check with the delivery of the meal being the only contact that a service user may have had that day. Members commented that additional time spent with the service user may serve as a good investment as staff may be able to recognise when the service user may need to be referred to another service for additional support, and in turn currently reduces pressure on other Council services.
- Members requested that should this proposal be implemented, Officers should engage with the service users in advance of any changes, particularly in relation to the increase in cost and consideration should be given to where some service users may struggle to meet any potential increase. Committee noted that implementation of this proposal should include engagement and signposting of service users to any support that may be available to enable them to continue with the service, particularly as stated above, that some service users rely on this service for more than the delivery of a meal.
- Members emphasised the importance of maintaining the quality of the meals being delivered and were reassured to hear that they will continue to be developed by a dietician to ensure they are healthy and nutritious and that a number of tests are carried out to ensure they are delivered safely and comply with food safety standards.

- Members asked for data to be monitored during any potential adaptations. They also requested that Exit Surveys are undertaken if service users terminate using the service so this could be analysed, and improvements made where necessary.
- Members were pleased that the options had been developed in consultation with staff members. The Committee requested that as many service users as possible are reached during the consultation period and beyond as their input and feedback is imperative as the proposals will directly impact them.
- Members stated that meals should continue to be delivered in recyclable containers to ensure the Council are contributing to the Welsh Government's Zero Waste target by 2050.

At the conclusion of the Committee's discussions in respect of these proposals, Members noted a wish to scrutinise the delivery of any changes to this service over the short to medium term.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christian Hanagan', written over a faint, light-colored circular stamp or watermark.

Christian Hanagan

Service Director Democratic Services and Communication

Appendix 3: Frequently Asked Questions

Frequently Asked Questions – Community Meals (Meals on Wheels) Proposals

Why is the Council making these changes?

The Council is facing significant financial challenges and is considering the remodelling of several service change proposals to contribute to the shortfall in funding.

What are the proposals for Community Meals Service?

There are four proposals being considered: –

Option 1: to continue the service as it currently operates with increased service user charges.

Option 2: to reorganise the existing internal service with increased service user charges

Option 3: (Preferred Option for Consultation): to reorganise the existing internal service and provide a hot/frozen Community Meal home delivery service with increased service user charges

Option 4: to cease the current service and support service users to find alternative options.

Will my meal still be cooked for me and delivered to my house?

Prepared meals will be delivered to the Council's Community Meals Kitchen by an external supplier. The meals will be heated in the Council's Community Meals Kitchen and delivered hot, to your home, Monday to Friday between 11.30am and 2.00pm.

Will my meal still be delivered by the same delivery driver?

Meals will still be delivered by Community Meals drivers, but it may not be the same delivery person.

What will happen on Saturday and Sunday?

Your weekend meals will stay the same. A frozen meal and dessert will be delivered to you on a Friday, ready for the weekend.

Can I have a frozen meal delivered in the week so I can heat it myself?

Yes, the frozen meal delivery service offers the flexibility so that you can heat it when it suits you rather than being restricted to a hot meal delivery time.

How much will I have to pay for my meal under the new proposal?

The current cost of a hot meal and dessert is £4.05. The proposal includes a 50 pence price increase. The new cost for a hot meal and dessert will be £4.55. The cost of a frozen meal and dessert would also be £4.55.

Will I order my meals the same way?

There will be no change to how you contact us and order your meals. You can either telephone the Community Meals Office on 01443 281140, Monday to Friday, speak to your Community Meals delivery person or email us on MealsonWheels@rctcbc.gov.uk.

Will I still be able to have a special therapeutic diet?

Yes, we can cater for a range of textured meals and special diets. Telephone the Community Meals Office or speak to your Community Meals delivery person for more information.

How will I pay for my meal?

We will continue to send you a monthly invoice, which you can pay over the telephone, online, BACS transfer, cheque or by cash or debit/credit card at your nearest One4All Centre/Post Office/Barclays Bank.

What happens next?

Following the public consultation, a report will be presented to the Council's Cabinet summarising the results and feedback.

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EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM INCLUDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

(Revised March 2021)

Please refer to the current Equality Impact Assessment guidance when completing this document. If you would like further guidance please contact the Diversity and Inclusion Team on 01443 444529.

An equality impact assessment **must** be undertaken at the outset of any proposal to ensure robust evidence is considered in decision making. This documentation will support the Council in making informed, effective and fair decisions whilst ensuring compliance with a range of relevant legislation, including:

- Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010.

This document will also contribute towards our duties to create a More Equal Wales within the

- Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015.

The [‘A More Equal Wales – Mapping Duties’](#) guide highlights the alignment of our duties in respect of the above-mentioned legislation.

SECTION 1 – PROPOSAL DETAILS

Lead Officer: Andrea Richards

Service Director: Gaynor Davies

Service Area: Catering Services, Education & Inclusion Services

Date: 12.01.23

1.a) What are you assessing for impact?

Strategy/Plan	Service Re-Model/Discontinuation of Service	Policy/Procedure	Practice	Information/Position Statement
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.b) What is the name of the proposal?

Community Meals Service Review

1.c) Please provide an overview of the proposal providing any supporting links to reports or documents.

The Council is facing significant financial challenges into the medium term and is considering the remodelling of key service areas to contribute to addressing the shortfall in funding. A review of the Community Meals Service has been undertaken and several options for the future of the service have been evaluated.

Option 1: to continue the service as it currently operates with increased service user charges.

Option 2: to reorganise the existing internal service with increased service user charges.

Option 3: to reorganise the existing internal service and provide a hot/frozen Community Meal home delivery service with increased service user charges.

Option 4: to cease the current service and support service users to find alternative options.

There is no statutory requirement for the Council to provide a Community Meals service and it is highly subsidised. The proposal seeks approval from Cabinet to initiate a consultation on the preferred service change proposal of option 3.

The current service provides a prime cooked hot meal and dessert, five days a week, with an option of a frozen meal for the weekend, delivered on a Friday, as part of the regular daily delivery service. Meals are prepared on site at one central kitchen in Ynyshir by a variety of kitchen staff. 2 Members of staff in each of the 14 vans deliver the meals.

The proposal would consist of providing service users with a choice of either a hot or frozen meal delivery service, which they 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. The meals would be regenerated on-site with a reduced number of staff and hours in the kitchen, half the number of delivery drivers. Community Meals staff will continue to offer a welfare check to service users and support clients with plating a meal if required

1.d) Please outline where delivery of this proposal is affected by legislation or other drivers such as code of practice.

There is no statutory requirement to provide a Community Meals Service.

1.e) Please outline who this proposal affects:

- Service users
- Employees
- Wider community

SECTION 2 – SCREENING TEST – IS A FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT REQUIRED?

Screening is used to determine whether the initiative has positive, negative or neutral impacts upon protected groups. Where negative impacts are identified for protected groups then a full Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Please provide as much detail as possible of how the proposal will impact on the following groups, this may not necessarily be negative, but may impact on a group with a particular characteristic in a specific way.

Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and foster good relations between different groups. Please take an intersectional approach in recognising an individual may have more than one protected characteristic.

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Age (<i>Specific age groups i.e. young people or older people</i>)	Negative	<p>The proposal would have a negative impact on older people, who may be more likely to be unable to prepare a meal for themselves and rely on the Community Meals Service to provide assistance to manage and maintain their own nutrition and well-being.</p> <p>The Council is continuing to provide a delivered meal service to support this group of people. However, a proposed increase in the cost of a meal may impact on some older people, as the majority of service users are over 70 years of age.</p> <p>Also, if service users are unable to afford the service, and withdraw, this could impact on other areas of the Council such as Adult Social Care.</p> <p>To mitigate the impact of a 50p increase in the cost of a meal to service users, the Council will continue to highlight Cost of Living support and advice from the Welsh Government and UK Government, which can be found on the Council’s website (https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ConsumerAdviceandMoneyMatters/CostofLivingSupport/CostofLivingSupport.aspx)</p>	<p>The age profile of current service users is detailed in Table 2 of the Cabinet report and illustrates that the service, in the main, supports the older generation with 86% of service users aged over 70 years.</p> <p>In RCT the population aged 65+ has increased by</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>and GOV.UK website, e.g. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. This information will be included in the letter sent to service users advising them of the outcome of the consultation and the preferred option for the future of the Community Meals Service and on the Council's website.</p> <p>Community Meals Staff:</p> <p>The age profile of staff ranges from 35 to 65 years.</p> <p>To mitigate any compulsory redundancies, opportunities for redeployment will be available (in particular, in our school kitchens to assist with the roll-out of Universal Primary Free School Meals) and utilising the Council's Enhanced Voluntary Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy Scheme for eligible staff, as part of on-going workforce planning arrangements.</p>	<p>16.2% between 2011 and 2021, compared to a Wales total growth in this age range of 17.7%.</p> <p>A report by Age UK (June 2021), identifies that 2.1 million (18%) of pensioners in the UK live in poverty. Rates have risen since 2013-14 when 1.6 million (14%) lived in poverty.</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			Staffing profile from iTrent.
Disability <i>(people with visible and non-visible disabilities or long-term health conditions)</i>	Negative	<p>The proposal would have a negative impact on service users with a disability / long-term health condition, who may be more likely to be unable to prepare a meal for themselves and rely on the Community Meals Service to provide assistance to manage and maintain their own nutrition and well-being.</p> <p>The Council is continuing to provide a delivered meal service to support this group of people. However, a proposed increase in the cost of a meal may impact on some service users who have either a physical or mental disability.</p> <p>Also, if service users are unable to afford the service, and withdraw, this could impact on other areas of the Council such as Adult Social Care.</p> <p>To mitigate the impact of a 50p increase in the cost of a meal to service users, the Council will continue to highlight Cost of Living support and advice from the Welsh Government and UK Government, which can be</p>	Our service records indicate that a proportion of service users have some significant needs, with 11% experiencing mobility issues and 11% displaying significant confusion. A further 3% of clients display both mobility issues and memory loss.

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>found on the Council's website (https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ConsumerAdviceandMoneyMatters/CostofLivingSupport/CostofLivingSupport.aspx) and GOV.UK website, e.g. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. This information will be included in the letter sent to service users advising them of the outcome of the consultation and the preferred option for the future of the Community Meals Service and on the Council's website.</p> <p>It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on staff.</p>	<p>The Health Foundation (April 2021) reported that at all ages people in poverty are more likely to report their health as less than good than people who are not in poverty. Poverty rates in the UK are not improving, and therefore, a significant challenge exists to reduce poverty and the subsequent negative implications for health.</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Gender Reassignment <i>(anybody who's gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex they were assigned at birth including non-binary identities)</i>	Neutral	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.
Marriage or Civil Partnership <i>(people who are married or in a civil partnership)</i>	Neutral	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.
Pregnancy and Maternity <i>(women who are pregnant/on maternity leave)</i>	Neutral	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			share this characteristic.
Race <i>(ethnic and racial groups i.e. minority ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers)</i>	Neutral	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.
Religion or Belief <i>(people with different religions and philosophical beliefs including people with no beliefs)</i>	Neutral	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic. The Service is able to offer culturally appropriate food choices, however, requests for meal choices such as kosher and halal are limited. Vegetarian and vegan meal options are readily available.	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.
Sex <i>(women and men, girls and boys)</i>	Neutral	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			share this characteristic.
Sexual Orientation <i>(bisexual, gay, lesbian, straight)</i>	Neutral	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.

In addition, due to Council commitments made to the following groups of people we would like you to consider impacts upon them:

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?

<p>Armed Forces Community <i>(anyone who is serving, has served, family members and the bereaved)</i></p>	Neutral	<p>It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic, as the Council is continuing to provide a delivered meal service to the service user.</p>	<p>It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.</p>
<p>Carers <i>(anyone of any age who provides unpaid care)</i></p>	Neutral	<p>The proposal would have a neutral impact on carers, who may take responsibility for providing care for family members / friends / neighbours, as the Council is continuing to provide a delivered meal service to service users. However, a proposed increase in the cost of a meal could impact on carers, if the service user can no longer afford this service, which could put additional pressures on carers.</p> <p>To mitigate the impact of a 50p increase in the cost of a meal to service users, the Council will continue to highlight Cost of Living support and advice from the Welsh Government and UK Government, which can be found on the Council's website (https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ConsumerAdviceandMoneyMatters/CostofLivingSupport/CostofLivingSupport.aspx) and GOV.UK website, e.g. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. This information will be included in the letter sent to service users advising them of the outcome of the consultation and the preferred option for the future of the Community Meals Service and on the Council's website.</p>	<p>Assessment of impact on service users during and following consultation stage.</p>

If the initial screening test has identified negative impacts then a full equality impact assessment (section 4) **must** be undertaken. However, if after undertaking the above screening test you determine a full equality impact assessment is not relevant please provide an adequate explanation below:

N/A

Are you happy you have sufficient evidence to justify your decision?

Yes

No

Name: Andrea Richards

Position: Service Director for 21st Century Schools and Transformation

Date: 12/01/23

Please forward a copy of this completed screening form to the Diversity and Inclusion Team.

PLEASE NOTE – there is a separate impact assessment for Welsh Language. This must also be completed for proposals.

Section 3 Socio-economic Duty needs only to be completed if proposals are of a strategic nature or when reviewing previous strategic decisions. Definition of a ‘strategic nature’ is available on page 6 of the [Preparing for the Commencement of the Socio-economic Duty](#) Welsh Government Guidance.

SECTION 3 – SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY (STRATEGIC DECISIONS ONLY)

The Socio-economic Duty gives us an opportunity to do things differently and put tackling inequality genuinely at the heart of key decision making. Socio-economic disadvantage means living on a low income compared to others in Wales, with little or no accumulated wealth, leading to greater material deprivation, restricting the ability to access basic goods and services.

Please consider these additional vulnerable groups and the impact your proposal may or may not have on them:

- Single parents and vulnerable families
- Pensioners
- Looked after children
- Homeless people
- Students
- Single adult households

- People living in the most deprived areas in Wales
- People with low literacy and numeracy
- People who have experienced the asylum system
- People misusing substances
- People of all ages leaving a care setting
- People involved in the criminal justice system

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<p>Low Income/<u>Income Poverty</u> <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i></p>	Negative	<p>The impact of this proposal may have a negative impact on service users that may be unable to afford the proposed increase in the meal price.</p> <p>To mitigate the impact of a 50p increase in the cost of a meal to service users, the Council will continue to highlight Cost of Living support and advice from the Welsh Government and UK Government, which can be found on the Council's website (https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ConsumerAdviceandMoneyMatters/CostofLivingSupport/CostofLivingSupport.aspx) and GOV.UK website, e.g. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. This information will be included in the letter sent to service users advising them of the outcome of the consultation and the preferred option for the future of the Community Meals Service and on the Council's website.</p>	<p>Age UK (June 2021) reported that 2.1 million (18%) of pensioner living in the UK live in poverty. Rates have risen since 2013-14 when 1.6 million (14%) lived in poverty.</p> <p>Assessment of impact on service users during and following consultation stage.</p>
<p>Low and / or No Wealth <i>(enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and</i></p>	Negative	<p>The impact of this proposal may have a negative impact on service users that may be unable to afford the proposed increase in the meal price.</p>	<p>Assessment of impact on service users during and following consultation stage.</p>

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<i>no provisions for the future)</i>		To mitigate the impact of a 50p increase in the cost of a meal to service users, the Council will continue to highlight Cost of Living support and advice from the Welsh Government and UK Government, which can be found on the Council's website (https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ConsumerAdviceandMoneyMatters/CostofLivingSupport/CostofLivingSupport.aspx) and GOV.UK website, e.g. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. This information will be included in the letter sent to service users advising them of the outcome of the consultation and the preferred option for the future of the Community Meals Service and on the Council's website.	
<u>Material Deprivation</u> <i>(unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.)</i>	Negative	The impact of this proposal may have a negative impact on service users that may be unable to afford the proposed increase in meal price and who are unable to afford to heat or prepare meals.	Age UK (June 2021) reported that in the annual DWP Households Below Average Income report found that around 700,000 people age 65 or over (6%) were in material deprivation in 2019/20.

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>To mitigate this impact, as part of the consultation process, service users will be assessed to ensure that there is adequate means of safely storing meals, in terms of appropriate white goods, and appropriate means of heating and preparing meals if required.</p> <p>To mitigate the impact of a 50p increase in the cost of a meal to service users, the Council will continue to highlight Cost of Living support and advice from the Welsh Government and UK Government, which can be found on the Council's website (https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ConsumerAdviceandMoneyMatters/CostofLivingSupport/CostofLivingSupport.aspx) and GOV.UK website, e.g. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. This information will be included in the letter sent to service users advising them of the outcome of the consultation and the preferred option for the future of the Community Meals Service and on the Council's website.</p>	<p>Assessment of impact on service users during and following consultation stage.</p>

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<u>Area Deprivation</u> <i>(where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport))</i>	Negative	<p>The impact of this proposal may have a negative impact on service users that may be unable to afford the proposed increase in the meal price.</p> <p>To mitigate the impact of a 50p increase in the cost of a meal to service users, the Council will continue to highlight Cost of Living support and advice from the Welsh Government and UK Government, which can be found on the Council's website (https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ConsumerAdviceandMoneyMatters/CostofLivingSupport/CostofLivingSupport.aspx) and GOV.UK website, e.g. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. This information will be included in the letter sent to service users advising them of the outcome of the consultation and the preferred option for the future of the Community Meals Service and on the Council's website.</p>	<p>The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019) indentified RCT to have the third highest rate of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that are in the most deprived 10% of areas in Wales. RCT also has the third highest number of LSOAs in the most deprived 50% of areas in Wales.</p> <p>Assessment of impact on service users during and following consultation stage.</p>
<u>Socio-economic background</u> <i>(social class i.e. parents education, employment and income)</i>	Negative	<p>The impact of this proposal may have a negative impact on service users that may be unable to afford the proposed increase in the meal price.</p> <p>To mitigate the impact of a 50p increase in the cost of a meal to service users, the Council will</p>	<p>Assessment of impact on service users during and following consultation stage.</p>

		<p>continue to highlight Cost of Living support and advice from the Welsh Government and UK Government, which can be found on the Council's website (https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ConsumerAdviceandMoneyMatters/CostofLivingSupport/CostofLivingSupport.aspx) and GOV.UK website, e.g. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. This information will be included in the letter sent to service users advising them of the outcome of the consultation and the preferred option for the future of the Community Meals Service and on the Council's website.</p>	
<p>Socio-economic disadvantage <i>(What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)</i></p>	Negative	<p>The impact of this proposal may have a negative impact on service users that may be unable to afford the proposed increase in the meal price.</p> <p>To mitigate the impact of a 50p increase in the cost of a meal to service users, the Council will continue to highlight Cost of Living support and advice from the Welsh Government and UK Government, which can be found on the Council's website (https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ConsumerAdviceandMoneyMatters/CostofLivingSupport/CostofLivingSupport.aspx) and GOV.UK website, e.g. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. This information will be included in the letter sent to service users advising them of the outcome of the consultation and the preferred</p>	<p>Assessment of impact on service users during and following consultation stage.</p>

		option for the future of the Community Meals Service and on the Council's website.	
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SECTION 4 – FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

You should use the information gathered at the screening stage to assist you in identifying possible negative/adverse impacts and clearly identify which groups are affected.

- 4.a) In terms of disproportionate/negative/adverse impacts that the proposal may have on a protected group, outline the steps that will be taken to reduce or mitigate the impact for each group identified. **Attach a separate action plan where impacts are substantial.**

The proposal has a negative impact on eight disadvantaged groups highlighted in sections 2 and 3, which includes age, disability, those on Low Income / Income Poverty, Low and / or No Wealth, Material Deprivation, Area Deprivation, Socio-economic Background and Socio-Economic Disadvantage.

To minimise the impact of a price increase on these groups, the Council will reorganise the Service and continue to provide a subsidisation, which will keep the price of the meal as low as possible at £4.55, whilst taking into account inflationary price increases. This still demonstrates good value for money when compared to prices charged by other Local Authorities for a similar service or the price an external provider would charge for a frozen delivery meal service only. The Council will continue to highlight Cost of Living support and advice from the Welsh Government and UK Government, which can be found on the Council's website

(<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ConsumerAdviceandMoneyMatters/CostofLivingSupport/CostofLivingSupport.aspx>) and GOV.UK website, e.g. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. This information will be included in the letter sent to service users advising them of the outcome of the consultation and the preferred option for the future of the Community Meals Service and on the Council's website.

The Chancellor, in his Autumn Statement on 17.11.22, announced measures, which will assist households facing financial challenges, such as additional cost of living payments in 2023/24 of £900 to households on means tested benefits; £300 to pensioner households and £150 to individuals on disability benefit. Also, in April 2023, the state pension will increase in line with inflation, which equates to a £870 increase. Benefits will also rise in line with inflation.

- 4.b) If ways of reducing the impact have been identified but are not possible, please explain why they are not possible.

To be updated when redeployment opportunities have been identified and expressions of interest for Enhanced Voluntary Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy Scheme received.

- 4.c) Give sufficient detail of data or research that has led to your reasoning, in particular, the sources used for establishing the demographics of service users/staff.

Community Meals Service records and Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) together with the outcome of the recent consultation feedback and staff meetings held.

- 4.d) Give details of how you engaged with service users/staff on the proposals and the steps taken to avoid any disproportionate impact on a protected group. Explain how you have used feedback to influence your decision.

The Community Meals consultation was conducted in-house and ran from the 5th December 2022 and ended on the 9th January 2023. The methodology which was utilised to promote and collect the data was a mixture of an online survey which was built using Snap XMP. A printed format of the electronic survey along with a letter and FAQ sheet was sent to each of the 849 service users, with a freepost address available for return, as well as the option to return the forms to the Community Meal Drivers who would be available to assist and support service users who were unable to fill the questionnaire out due any challenges they personally experience.

Also, to ensure wider outreach and involvement of the wider community the consultation was also 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.

Respondents were also encouraged to write in using a dedicated email address consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk, in order to allow them to share their views. In addition, a telephone consultation option was in place, through the Council's contact centre to assist people who have difficulty in filling forms out for a particular reason. This option also allowed 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.

In terms of staff feedback, a meeting was held with Community Meals staff and their Trade Union representatives on 23rd November 2022, to explain the proposals and allow staff to ask any questions and participate in the consultation process.

The proposals were also presented and discussed at the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 14th December 2022.

The results from the online and paper questionnaires and telephone calls received (416 responses) were collated in a report and attached to the Cabinet report to assist Cabinet Members to receive the full feedback to enable them with decision making.

4.e) Are you satisfied that the engagement process complies with the requirements of the Statutory Equality and Socio-economic Duties?

Yes

No

SECTION 5 – MONITORING AND REVIEW

5a) Please outline below how the implementation of the proposal will be monitored:

Following the outcome of Cabinet's decision, the impact assessment will be reviewed and Cabinet will receive a further report in due course on progress of the implementation of the preferred option and data on current service users utilisation of the service.

5b) When is the evaluation of the proposal due to be reviewed?

To be determined following Cabinet's final decision.

5c) Who is responsible for the monitoring and review of the proposal?

Director of Education & Inclusion Services

5d) How will the results of the monitoring be used to develop future proposals?

The results of the monitoring will be assessed to inform Cabinet of service user utilisation and any future changes that may be required to support the delivery of the preferred option approved by Cabinet.

SECTION 6 – REVIEW

As part of the Impact Assessment process all proposals that fall within the definition of ‘Key Decisions’ must be submitted to the Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your proposal is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.

If this proposal is a Key Decision please forward your impact assessment to Councilbusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk for a Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. The EqlA guidance document provides more information on what a Key Decision is.

It is important to keep a record of this process so that you can demonstrate how you have considered equality and socio-economic outcomes. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below

Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation
	12/01/2023	The impact assessment has been reviewed following the comments in the consultataion document

SECTION 6 – SUMMARY OF IMPACTS FOR THE PROPOSAL

Provide below a summary of the impact assessment. This summary should be included in the equality and socio-economic impact section of the Cabinet report template. The impact assessment should be published alongside the report.

There is no statutory requirement for the Council to provide a Community Meals service and it is highly subsidised. The proposal seeks approval from Cabinet to consider the outcome of the consultation on the preferred service change proposal and provide officers with a recommended way forward for future delivery of the service.

The current service provides a prime cooked hot meal and dessert, five days a week, with an option of a frozen meal for the weekend. The proposal would consist of providing service users with a choice of either a hot or frozen meal delivery service, which they could order through a central point of contact within the Council. 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. The meals would be regenerated on-site with a reduced number of staff and hours in the kitchen, and a reduction in the number of delivery drivers. Community Meals staff will continue to offer a welfare check to service users and support clients with plating a meal if required.

There are 8 negative and 9 neutral equality and diversity implications associated with this report. These risks will be mitigated by a range of actions as detailed in the impact assessment and a separate action plan is included as Appendix 4i.

SECTION 7 – AUTHORISATIONS

Lead Officer:

Name: Andrea Richards

Position: Service Director of 21st Century Schools and Transformation

Date: 12.01.23

I recommend that the proposal:

- Is implemented with no amendments
- Is implemented taking into account the mitigating actions outlined
- Is rejected due to disproportionate negative impacts on protected groups or socio-economic disadvantage

Head of Service/Director Approval:

Name: Gaynor Davies

Position: Director of Education & Inclusion Services

Date: 12.01.23

Please submit this impact assessment with any SLT/Cabinet Reports.

			a preferred option
Disability	<p>Community Meals Service records indicate that a proportion of service users have some significant health needs in terms of mobility and confusion/memory loss. The Health Foundaion (April 2021) reported that at all ages people are more likely to report their health as less than good than people who are not in poverty. Poverty rates in the UK are not improving, and therefore, a significant challenge exists to reduce poverty and the subsequent negative implications for health.</p> <p>To mitigate the impact of a 50p increase in the cost of a meal to service users, the Council will continue to highlight Cost of Living support and advice from the Welsh Government and UK Government, which can be found on the Council's website (https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ConsumerAdviceandMoneyMatters/CostofLivingSupport/CostofLivingSupport.aspx) and GOV.UK website, e.g. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. This information will be included in the letter sent to service users advising them of the outcome of the consultation and the preferred option for the future of the Community Meals Service and on the Council's website.</p>	Business Manager, Catering	To be confirmed subject to Cabinet approval of a preferred option
Financial Hardship:	Age UK (June 2021) reported that 2.1 million (18%) of pensioner living in the UK live in poverty. Rates have risen since 2013-14 when 1.6 million (14%) lived in poverty.	Business Manager, Catering	To be confirmed subject to

<p>Low Income/Income Poverty Low and/or No Wealth Material Deprivation Area Deprivation Socio-economic Background Socio-economic Disadvantage</p>	<p>Age UK (June 2021) also reported that in the annual DWP Households Below Average Income report found that around 700,000 people age 65 or over (6%) were in material deprivation in 2019/20.</p> <p>The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019) indentified RCT to have the third highest rate of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that are in the most deprived 10% of areas in Wales. RCT also has the third highest number of LSOAs in the most deprived 50% of areas in Wales.</p> <p>To mitigate the impact of a 50p increase in the cost of a meal to service users, the Council will continue to highlight Cost of Living support and advice from the Welsh Government and UK Government, which can be found on the Council's website (https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ConsumerAdviceandMoneyMatters/CostofLivingSupport/CostofLivingSupport.aspx) and GOV.UK website, e.g. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. This information will be included in the letter sent to service users advising them of the outcome of the consultation and the preferred option for the future of the Community Meals Service and on the Council's website.</p> <p>For those service users who want to receive frozen meals, the Council will assess them to ensure they have the appropriate means of storing and heating the meals. If service users no longer feel they can afford the meals, the Council will highlight alternative providers in the locality.</p>	<p>Community Meals Team</p>	<p>Cabinet approval of a preferred option</p> <p>To be confirmed subject to Cabinet approval of a preferred option</p>
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APPENDIX 5: WELSH LANGUAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOL

This Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIS) tool enables RCT Council to consider the principles and requirements of the [Welsh Language Standards \(No.1\) Regulations 2015](#) to ensure compliance with the [Welsh Language \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#).

Stage 1 – Information Gathering	
NOTE: As you complete this tool you will be asked for evidence to support your views . Please see Welsh Language Impact Assessment Guidance for more information on data sources.	
Proposal Name:	Community Meals Service Review
Department	Education & Inclusion Services
Service Director	Gaynor Davies
Officer Completing the WLIA	Lisa Kidner
Email	Lisa.J.Kidner@rctcbc.gov.uk
Phone	07795 391750
Brief Description	<p>The Council is facing significant financial challenges into the medium term and is considering the remodelling of key service areas to contribute to addressing the shortfall in funding. A review of the Community Meals Service has been undertaken and several options for the future of the service have been evaluated.</p> <p>Option 1: to continue the service as it currently operates with increased service user charges.</p> <p>Option 2: to reorganise the existing internal service with increased service user charges.</p> <p>Option 3: to reorganise the existing internal service and provide a hot/frozen Community Meal home delivery service with increased service user charges.</p> <p>Option 4: to cease the current service and support service users to find alternative options.</p>

	<p>There is no statutory requirement for the Council to provide a Community Meals service and it is highly subsidised. The proposal seeks approval from Cabinet to initiate a consultation on the preferred service change proposal of option 3.</p>
<p>Date</p>	<p>12th January 2023</p>
<p>Please outline who this proposal affects? (Service Users, Employees, Wider Community)</p>	<p>The proposal will affect service users, employees and the wider community.</p> <p>The current service provides a prime cooked hot meal and dessert, five days a week, with an option of a frozen meal for the weekend, delivered on a Friday, as part of the regular daily delivery service. Meals are prepared on site at one central kitchen in Ynyshir by a variety of kitchen staff. 2 Members of staff in each of the 14 vans deliver the meals.</p> <p>The proposal would consist of providing service users with a choice of either a hot or frozen meal delivery service, which they 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. The meals would be regenerated on-site with a reduced number of staff and hours in the kitchen, half the number of delivery drivers. Community Meals staff will continue to offer a welfare check to service users and support clients with plating a meal if required</p> <p>If the Community Meals Service were to reorganise and move to a hot/frozen meal, instead of a prime cooked meal with increased charges, service users would be affected as they would have to pay more for their meal and it would be a frozen cooked meal in place of a prime cooked meal.</p> <p>Current employees of the Community Meals Service would also be affected by the proposal. The estimated reduction in staffing numbers required would be 21, however, the Council would seek to ensure that compulsory redundancies are avoided by exploring opportunities for redeployment (in particular, in our school kitchens to assist with the roll-out of Universal Free School Meals) and utilising the Council's Enhanced Voluntary Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy Scheme for eligible staff, as part of on-going workforce planning arrangements.</p>

The proposal will also impact on the wider community in terms of:-

- Family/carers – potential increased pressure on this group to provide care and support if service users do not want to choose this option.
- Council – potential increased pressure on other parts of the Adult Social Care system.
- Supermarkets/third party meal providers – increased opportunity to provide business if service users are unable to afford increased charges or do not want this option.

<p>What are the aims of the policy, and how do these relate to the Welsh Language?</p>	<p>The aim of the proposal is to consult on the preferred option, which is to reorganise the existing internal service and provide a hot/frozen Community Meal delivery service, with increased service user charges, thus reducing the subsidy per meal. The Consultation with service users, employees and the wider community will be undertaken in both Welsh and English and accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.</p>																											
<p>Who will benefit / Could the policy affect Welsh language groups? If so, list them here.</p>	<p>Welsh language groups such as service users, employees and the wider community will continue to be able to deal with the Council in the Welsh language, if they choose to do so, as there will be continuity of service.</p>																											
<p>Current linguistic profile of the geographical area(s) concerned</p>	<p>Every ten years the nation sets aside one day for the Census – a count of all people and households. The Census is a key source of information about the number of people who can speak Welsh</p> <p>The 2011 indicated that of the 225,555 residents living in the County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf, 12.3% (27,779) were able to speak Welsh, whilst the remaining 87.6% (197,776) were not able to speak Welsh. This can be compared to the All-Wales figures that showed, of the 2,955,841 residents living in Wales, 19.0% (562,016) were able to speak Welsh, whilst the remaining 81.0% (2,393,825) were not able to speak Welsh.</p> <p>The table that follows illustrates the Welsh language skills of residents living in the County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="799 839 1957 1297"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">Welsh Language Skills of Residents</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th>Rhondda Cynon Taf</th> <th>All Wales</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Can Speak, Read and Write Welsh</td> <td>9.7%</td> <td>14.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Can Speak and Read but Cannot Write Welsh</td> <td>0.9%</td> <td>1.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Can Speak but Cannot Read or Write Welsh</td> <td>1.6%</td> <td>2.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Can Understand Spoken Welsh Only</td> <td>4.2%</td> <td>5.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Combination of Skills</td> <td>3.3%</td> <td>2.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No Skills</td> <td>80.4%</td> <td>73.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>100.0%</td> <td>100.0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Welsh Language Skills of Residents				Rhondda Cynon Taf	All Wales	Can Speak, Read and Write Welsh	9.7%	14.6%	Can Speak and Read but Cannot Write Welsh	0.9%	1.5%	Can Speak but Cannot Read or Write Welsh	1.6%	2.7%	Can Understand Spoken Welsh Only	4.2%	5.3%	Other Combination of Skills	3.3%	2.5%	No Skills	80.4%	73.3%	Total	100.0%	100.0%
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No Skills	80.4%	73.3%																										
Total	100.0%	100.0%																										

The Annual Population Survey collects information about respondents Welsh speaking ability and includes a question on how often people speak Welsh. It is updated quarterly, so is a more up-to-date source than the Census. The most recent Annual Population Survey, for the quarter ending June 2022, reported that 20.5% of respondents living in the County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf said they could speak Welsh this is compared to the All-Wales figure of 29.7% of respondents. This can be further broken down into the data contained in the table below:-

Welsh Language Skills of Residents – (%)		
	County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf	Wales
Can Read Welsh	17.9%	26%
Can Write Welsh	17.2%	24%
Can Understand Spoken Welsh	24.1%	33.4%

The data demonstrates that in each Welsh language skill area, the ‘all Wales’ percentages are notably higher than the County Borough percentages. However, the current data shows a significant increase in the number of residents that can read, write, and understand spoken Welsh since the last Census in 2011.

When asked about their frequency of speaking Welsh, the table below provides a breakdown of responses of respondents living in the County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf compared to the all Wales responses.

Welsh Language Skills of Residents – (%)		
	County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf	Wales
Speak Welsh Daily	7.4%	14.8%
Speak Welsh Weekly	5.0%	5.6%
Use it Less Often	6.1%	7.6%

The data demonstrates that the percentage of respondents that speak Welsh daily is far lower for the County Borough than the all Wales percentage.

	<p>The Welsh Language Use Survey for the years 2013 to 2015, contains detailed information about Welsh speaker's fluency and their use of the Welsh language in a range of settings. When looking where respondents living in Wales learned to speak Welsh, the majority, 45.0%, learned to speak Welsh at home, followed by 26.0% who learned to speak Welsh at nursery school and primary school between the ages of 2 to 10 and 14.0% who learned to speak Welsh at secondary school at the age of 11 plus. The remaining 2.0% learned to speak Welsh in other settings, including at 'Welsh for Adults' courses.</p> <p>Updated following review panel on 12.01.23 to reflect 2021 Census figures:-</p> <p>Recently released 2021 Census figures regarding the Welsh language show that the anticipated increase in Welsh speakers across Wales as a whole has not been realised. The all-Wales figure showed a decrease on the percentage of Welsh speakers to 17.8%. There was a small increase in RCT, however, the percentage of our population who can speak Welsh increased from 12.3% to 12.4% and there was an increase of 2.8% in the number of Welsh speakers in the County Borough (from 27,779 to 28,556). RCT was also one of only four Local Authorities in Wales to see an increase in the percentage of Welsh speakers. The others were Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan and Merthyr Tydfil, all neighbouring Local Authorities, which could demonstrate that our region is seeing some positive trends in terms on increases in Welsh speakers and that there may be a resulting increase for services through the medium of Welsh. As further, more detailed, data from the Census becomes available for RCT (e.g. Lower Super Output Area data), we will need to consider how it may impact on the services we provide.</p>
<p>Other relevant data or research</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

In this section you need to consider the impact, the evidence and any action you are taking for improvement. This is to ensure that the opportunities for people who choose to live their lives and access services through the medium of Welsh are not inferior to what is afforded to those choosing to do so in English, in accordance with the requirement of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

Please note there is a separate impact assessment for Equality and Socio-Economic duty that must also be completed for policy proposals.

Remember that effects that are positive for some groups could be detrimental to others - even among Welsh language groups. Consider the effects on different groups. For example, a proposal may be beneficial to Welsh learners, but not to Welsh speakers.

Previous Welsh Language Impact Assessments can be found by [clicking here](#).

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>Opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language</p> <p>e.g. staff, residents and visitors</p> <p>The rights of Welsh speakers and learners to use Welsh when dealing with the council and for staff to use Welsh at Work</p>	Positive	The proposal will have a positive impact on service users, staff and the wider community, to use the Welsh language, if Cabinet approve the proposal to reorganise the existing internal service and provide a hot/frozen Community Meal home delivery service with increased service user chargers.	Clients of the Community Meals Service, employees and the wider community are currently able to deal with the Council through the medium of Welsh, if they choose, and our website and correspondence is bi-lingual. Phone greetings are also bi-lingual and customers are	Service users, staff and the wider community will be able to use the Welsh language, when they are given the opportunity to express their views on the proposal during the consultation process.
				Opportunities for redeployment (in particular,

		<p>The above Groups will continue to have opportunities to use the Welsh Language and have dialogue with the Council through this medium if they choose as there will be continuity of service. The Community Meals Service will also continue to promote the use and development of the Welsh Language in its operation.</p> <p>However, for those staff potentially made redundant as part of this proposal, the opportunity for them to use the Welsh Language with future employers may be limited or non-existent as the Welsh Language (Wales) Measures do not apply to non-public bodies.</p>	<p>encouraged to communicate with the Service in Welsh.</p> <p>Staff are encouraged to greet service users in Welsh and use the Welsh Language in work.</p> <p>All new starters must complete Level 1 Welsh, if they are not already a Welsh speaker, and there are opportunities to learn Welsh in the Council.</p>	<p>in our school kitchens to assist with the roll-out of Universal Free School Meals) will be explored so that staff affected by the proposal would continue to be employed by RCTCBC.</p>
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Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>Numbers and / or percentages of Welsh speakers e.g Welsh Medium Education / Study Opportunities. Links with the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Strategy / RCTCBC Five Year Welsh Language Strategy</p>	Neutral	<p>The proposal would have a neutral impact on the numbers and/or percentages of Welsh speakers with service users, employees and the wider community.</p> <p>The Community Meals Service will continue to promote the use of the Welsh Language.</p> <p>Staff are encouraged to learn Welsh and speak Welsh in work.</p>	<p>Staff are encouraged to learn and speak Welsh and are provided with staff updates from the Translation unit on training opportunities.</p> <p>All new starters must complete a Level 1 Welsh course if they are not already a Welsh speaker.</p> <p>The Community Meals Service currently has no Welsh speakers, however, there is a Welsh speaker within the 21st Century Schools Team who can assist.</p> <p>The Service is currently unaware of the number of service users who are Welsh speakers.</p>	<p>Catering Services are working with the Translation Unit to develop a tailored Level 1 Welsh course for kitchen staff which Community Meals staff would also benefit from. They will be able to learn Welsh words and phrases that would be specific to their role.</p> <p>The Service will update its referral form so that it captures information on service users' ability to speak Welsh.</p>
<p>Opportunities to promote the Welsh language</p>	Positive	<p>The proposal would have a positive impact on the opportunities to promote the</p>	<p>Current service users can have daily contact with Community Meals staff in person and over</p>	<p>Current service users will continue to receive a service from the Council</p>

<p>e.g. status, use of Welsh language services, use of Welsh in everyday life in work and in the community</p> <p>Actively encourage and promote the use of our services in Welsh to see an increase in demand over time</p>		<p>Welsh language with service users, employees and the wider community.</p> <p>The Community Meals Service is already promoted through the medium of Welsh on the Councils website and the continuation of the Service, will allow opportunities to further encourage and promote the Welsh language.</p> <p>All communication is bi-lingual. Enquiries in Welsh are responded to in Welsh. All consultation is undertaken bi-lingually.</p>	<p>the telephone where the Welsh language can be promoted as all staff have to undertake Level 1 training. Staff are provided with opportunities to learn Welsh.</p> <p>The Service is looking to develop an on-line referral form, which will be available in both Welsh and English.</p>	<p>so the Welsh language will continue to be promoted and all promotional material to new service users will be bi-lingual.</p>
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Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>Compliance with the <u>Council's Statutory Welsh Language Standards</u> e.g increasing or reducing the Council's ability to deliver services through the Medium of Welsh.</p> <p>Consider the rights of Welsh speakers to use Welsh when dealing with the Council and for staff to use Welsh at Work</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The proposal will have a positive impact on compliance with the Council's Statutory Welsh Language Standards as the new proposal is not reducing the Council's ability to deliver service through the medium of Welsh. A reorganisation of the Service will provide an opportunity to strengthen the standards.</p> <p>All digital and offline communications are bi-lingual. All consultation with customers is undertaken bi-lingually.</p> <p>We have a good working relationship with the Translation Unit, ensuring that all our</p>	<p>The consultation process will be in compliance with the Welsh Language standards as will all correspondence with service users and staff.</p>	

		documentation, letters, online material is compliant with the Welsh standards.		
<p>Treating the Welsh language, no less favourably than the English language</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>We will continue to monitor and improve systems in place to ensure that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language.</p> <p>All consultation documents and correspondence will be produced in both Welsh and English.</p> <p>All digital and offline communications are bi-lingual and any enquires/complaints in Welsh will be replied to in Welsh.</p> <p>Staff are encouraged to learn Welsh and speak Welsh in work. All new starters must complete Level 1 Welsh, if they are not already a Welsh speaker.</p>	<p>The Community Meals Service ensures their website content, correspondence with service users, signage, phone greetings etc are bi-lingual.</p>	

Stage 3 - Strengthening the proposal

Having listed actions in section 2 which may mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts – please record below which ones you will imbed into the policy proposal and who will be responsible for them.

Also consider is the proposal necessary? Would it be possible to meet demand without any new developments? Could other existing provision be used? Where should the development be?

What are you going to do?	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible?
We will require staff to complete the tailored Level 1 Welsh course	Once finalised by the Translation Unit	Principal Officer, Community Meals
Revise the referral form to capture if service users are Welsh speaking	Once service review is complete	Principal Officer, Community Meals
If ways of reducing the impact have been identified but are not possible to implement, please explain why. Give sufficient detail of data or research that has led to your reasoning.		
What was identified?	Why is it not possible?	
N/A	N/A	
N/A	N/A	

Stage 4 – Review

For all policy proposals, whether it is a Significant Key Decision or not, you are required to forward this assessment to Welsh Language services – welshlanguageofficer@rctcbc.gov.uk and the Consultation and Engagement team – consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk in the first instance for some initial guidance and feedback.

As part of the Welsh Language, Equalities and Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment Process all proposals that fall within the definition of Significant Key Decision should present at the Officer Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your report is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.

If this proposal is a Key Strategic Decision please forward your completed (Stage 1>6) impact assessment, policy proposal/report and consultation report to CouncilBusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk for an Officer Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. See our guidance document for more information on what a Significant Key Decision is.

It is important to keep a record of this process so that we can demonstrate how we have considered and built in sustainable Welsh language considerations wherever possible. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below in collaboration with the relevant departments.

Welsh Language Services Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Welsh Language Services feedback
Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation

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<u>Stage 5 – Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing</u>
How and who will you monitor the impact and effectiveness of the proposal?
Following the Consultation, Cabinet will receive a further report on the outcome of the consultation.

<u>Stage 6 – Summary of Impacts for the Proposal</u>
Provide below a summary of the impact assessment, to include some of the main positive and negative impacts along with an overview of actions taken since the impact assessment to better contribute to more positive impacts. This summary must be included in the Welsh Language Considerations section of the SLT/Cabinet report template. It is not suitable to only write ‘please see full report at Appendix x’ in the body of the report. The impact assessment must be published alongside the report.
<i>A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been completed and the main findings are as follows -</i>
Welsh language groups such as service users, employees and the wider community will continue to be able to deal with the Council in the Welsh language, if they choose to do so, as there will be continuity of service. There are no negative or adverse Welsh Language implications associated with the proposal.

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Stage 7 – Sign Off			
Name of Officer completing the WLIA	Lisa Kidner	Service Director Name:	Gaynor Davies
Position	Service Manager, Catering Services	I recommend that the proposal: (Highlight decision)	Is implemented with no amendments
			Is implemented taking into account the mitigating actions outlined
			Is rejected due to disproportionate negative impacts on the Welsh language
Signature	<i>LJ Kidner</i>	Service Director Signature	<i>Gaynor Davies</i>
Date	12.01.23	Date	12.01.23

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

**COUNCIL RUN NURSERY PROVISION – REVISED SERVICE DELIVERY
ARRANGEMENTS**

23RD JANUARY 2023

**REPORT OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS
WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR RHYS LEWIS)**

Author(s): Zoe Lancelott, Head of Community Wellbeing and Resilience

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Cabinet with details of the current arrangements for the delivery of childcare provision at Council run nurseries and to set out revised service delivery options for consideration to further improve the local childcare offer available to families, informed by a recent market testing exercise.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

2.1 Considers:

- the current service delivery arrangements and associated resources as set out in Section 5 of this report;
- the proposed service delivery options as set out in Section 6; and
- the findings of the market testing exercise as set out in paragraphs 6.5 to 6.7 of this report.

- 2.2 Agrees to implement the preferred option (Option 4) to transfer the running of all four Council run nursery settings to experienced registered childcare providers as set out in paragraph 6.4 of this report

- 2.3 Subject to 2.2 above, agrees to the formal procurement of experienced registered childcare providers as set out in paragraphs 6.7 to 6.9 of this report

- 2.4 Subject to 2.3 above, agrees to delegate authority to the Interim Director of Social Services, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, to award contracts following completion of the procurement process and to make all necessary arrangements for the subsequent transfer.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide Cabinet with revised service delivery proposals to further improve the local childcare offer available to families in local communities in line with the findings of the latest Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and informed by a recent market testing exercise, and to support more efficient service delivery.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Traditionally the Flying Start programme has offered grant funded part time childcare places for families living in particular geographical areas. Parents of children in Flying Start eligible areas are entitled to one funded 2.5 hour session per day, 5 days per week, 39 weeks per year for their child from the term after their second birthday until the term after their third birthday.
- 4.2 As part of the regional Early Years Transformation Programme, a hybrid approach to the delivery of childcare is currently being employed in Rhondda Cynon Taf. This comprises of funded childcare places (2.5 hours a day – morning or afternoon sessions, 5 days a week during term time) for children aged 2-3 years living in Flying Start postcode areas, and the provision of short term funded childcare places for children outside of Flying Start postcode areas with an assessed need.
- 4.3 Currently the Council commissions 50 Flying Start settings across Rhondda Cynon Taf, of which 4 (8%) are operated by the Council i.e. nurseries based at Tylorstown, Penrhys, Aman in Godreaman and Pontypridd. For information, from 28th October 2022 Ynyscynon nursery in Llwynypia transferred from the Council to an alternative childcare provider and further detail is included at Section 5.6.
- 4.4 Over recent years, there has been a reduction in the birth rate in Flying Start eligible postcode areas and as such, the number of children accessing Flying Start placements has subsequently declined in Penrhys and Ynyscynon. As a result, both settings have only operated on a part time basis (one session per day) for at least two years, and there is no evidence to indicate that this situation will change in the foreseeable future.
- 4.5 In addition to the delivery of Flying Start childcare, the setting in Pontypridd also operates as a day nursery providing full day care for a small number of fee paying children aged 0-8 years. As a day nursery, Pontypridd is open 7:30am to 6pm, 5 days per week, between 50 and 52 weeks per year (depending on parental demand). As such the staffing structure in Pontypridd differs from the other Flying Start settings and the nursery is staffed via two shifts per day (early and late). The day nursery provision is funded in part through charges made to families, the remaining cost is subsidised by the Council.
- 4.6 The provision of Flying Start childcare is managed by the Council, with places commissioned from private and third sector childcare providers. In line with the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022-2032 priority to increase the number of children receiving nursery education through the medium of Welsh,

the adoption of an approved suppliers list has enabled a flexible approach to the commissioning of Welsh medium childcare that is responsive to parental choice.

- 4.7 As a result of the pandemic and limited opportunities for young children and families to socialise during extended lockdown periods, many children are arriving in childcare settings displaying some element of developmental delay. The need to provide a range of local opportunities to enhance the personal and social development of their children has been identified as a priority and the availability of a range of high quality childcare provision locally is a key component to achieving this.
- 4.8 Earlier this year the Welsh Government announced additional funding to support the Flying Start Expansion Programme. The programme of work will see the roll out of Flying Start childcare for all children aged 2-3 years over the coming years. Whilst the Council is in a good position to facilitate this roll out, as a result of the hybrid approach in operation as part of the transformation pilot, it is essential that we prepare the external childcare sector to be able to meet the demand for places.
- 4.9 All Local Authorities in Wales have a responsibility under Section 26 of the Childcare Act 2006 to prepare Childcare Sufficiency Assessments (CSA's). This is to have a clear understanding of the childcare provision in their area, the needs of parents/carers and to develop an action plan to address any gaps identified. [At the Cabinet meeting held on 18th July 2022](#) the CSA was most recently considered and reviewed by Cabinet. The CSA identifies key strategic priorities for the provision of childcare services in Rhondda Cynon Taf for the next five years. In relation to the areas in which the Council run nurseries are located, the CSA found a lack of out of school registered settings in all areas. It also highlighted a general trend in the last 5 years of sessional care providers having changed their Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) registration to full day care to accommodate wrap around services for nursery aged children.
- 4.10 A Delegated Officer Decision was approved on [24th November 2022](#) to undertake a market testing exercise to inform revised service delivery proposals for Council run nursery provision, the results of which are set out at paragraphs 6.5 and 6.7.

5. CURRENT SERVICE DELIVERY FOR COUNCIL RUN NURSERIES

- 5.1 The Council employs a total of 27 term time staff, both part time and full time at its nurseries in Aman, Tylorstown, Penrhys and Pontypridd. This equates to 18.92 FTE posts. The level of staffing is compliant with CIW regulations for staff to child ratios and comprises of the following:

Nursery	Staff	Grade	FTE
Aman	Supervisor	GR8	0.95
	Deputy	GR5	0.94
	Childcare Worker	GR4	4.87
Total FTE			6.76
Tylorstown	Supervisor	GR8	0.95
	Deputy	GR5	0.88

	Childcare Worker	GR4	3.58
		Total FTE	5.41
Penrhys	Supervisor	GR8	0.47
	Deputy	GR5	0.44
	Childcare Worker	GR4	0.91
		Total FTE	1.82
Pontypridd	Supervisor	GR8	0.88
	Deputy	GR5	1.48
	Childcare Worker	GR4	2.57
		Total FTE	4.93

5.2 Below is a summary of occupancy levels for each nursery, showing the number of CIW registered places (this is the maximum number of children to be cared for at any one time and cannot be exceeded); the number of Flying Start commissioned places (each of which is a part-time place – either AM or PM session); and the number of part time places filled. The projected placement figures for Spring Term 2022/23 are based on the number of children living in the geographical area who will be eligible for a Flying Start place as a result of turning two during the Autumn Term (children are eligible for placement the term after their second birthday until the term after their third birthday).

AMAN FS	FS TERM 1 Summer term 2021/22	FS TERM 2 Autumn Term 2022/23	FS TERM 3 Spring Term 2022/23
Number of CIW registered places	30 (AM) 30 (PM)	30 (AM) 30 (PM)	30 (AM) 30 (PM)
Number of Flying Start commissioned part time places	48	48	48
Number of part time places filled	36	29	31 (projected)

PENRHYS FS	FS TERM 1 Summer term 2021/22	FS TERM2 Autumn Term 2022/23	FS TERM 3 Spring Term 2022/23
Number of CIW registered places	12 (AM) 12 (PM)	12 (AM) 12 (PM)	12 (AM) 12 (AM)
Number of Flying Start commissioned part time places	12	12	12
Number of part time places filled	9	10	7 (projected)

TYLORSTOWN FS	FS TERM 1 Summer term 2021/22	FS TERM 2 Autumn Term 2022/23	FS TERM 3 Spring Term 2022/23
Number of CIW registered places	26 (AM) 26 (PM)	26 (AM) 26 (PM)	26 (AM) 26 (PM)
Number of Flying Start commissioned part time places	44	44	44
Number of part time places filled	29	31	32 (projected)

PONTYPRIDD FS	FS TERM 1 Summer term 2021/22	FS TERM 2 Autumn Term 2022/23	FS TERM 3 Spring Term 2022/23
Number of CIW registered places	19* (AM) 19* (PM)	19* (AM) 19* (PM)	19* (AM) 19* (PM)
Number of Flying Start commissioned part time places	12	12	12
Number of part time places filled	10	9	6 (projected)

* Please note - this number includes both Flying Start and Day Nursery children

5.3 As can be seen above, the occupancy rates vary between settings, however common across all settings are much lower occupancy rates than both Flying Start commissioned places and CIW registered places. This is attributable to the service delivery model of Flying Start only provision and the model's limited flexibility to meet the needs of families, especially working parents requiring full-time day care provision.

5.4 The table below provides a summary of the occupancy of the Council's fee paying day nursery at Pontypridd:

PONTYPRIDD DAY NURSERY	TERM 1 Summer term 2021/22	TERM 2 Autumn Term 2022/23	TERM 3 Spring Term 2022/23
Number of CIW registered places	19* (AM) 19* (PM)	19* (AM) 19* (PM)	19* (AM) 19* (PM)
Number of day nursery places available per day	4	4	4
Number of children registered at day nursery	11	11	6 (projected)

* Please note - this number includes both Flying Start and Day Nursery children

5.5 The current staffing arrangements support up to four day nursery children at any one time and the projected number of registered children falls by almost half next term. This will have an impact on the income generated through fee paying children and, for Member's information, a new private day nursery is due to open early 2023 in Pontypridd, and this could potentially further impact on the number of fee paying children currently attending Pontypridd Day Nursery.

TRANSFER OF YNYSCYNON NURSERY PROVISION

5.6 The Ynyscynon setting is a relatively new purpose built childcare facility within the grounds of Coleg Y Cymoedd in Llwynypia and despite being registered with CIW to operate two sessions per day for up to 26 children per session, the setting had on average only 17 children attending in any one day. As such the setting was operating as a part time provision, open to children in the mornings only.

5.7 The recent Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022 identified the need for wrap around childcare and Childcare Offer places within the geographical area serviced by the nursery; however due to the staffing arrangements it would not have been

sustainable for the Council to expand their own delivery to include these services without incurring additional financial cost.

- 5.8 The Council was approached by an existing commissioned childcare provider who expressed an interest in taking over the existing Flying Start service delivery and the day to day running of the Ynyscynon nursery setting. This also included the TUPE of existing Council staff team to the new provider on their existing terms and conditions, offering protection for staff.
- 5.9 Ynyscynon nursery formally transferred to the new provider on 28th October to deliver full time Flying Start provision to maintain continuity of provision for children already registered with the setting. The provider also has plans to further develop the setting and to expand provision to include full day care and wrap around services for the community. This will enable the setting to offer a range of flexible childcare options including Childcare Offer places for 3-4 year olds.

COMPARISON OF FEE CHARGES (PONTYPRIDD DAY NURSERY)

- 5.10 The current fee charges at Pontypridd Day Nursery are set at the following flat rate irrespective of the age of the child. Whilst not the most expensive in Rhondda Cynon Taf, these rates are well above the average rate for Rhondda Cynon Taf with the weekly rate between £25 and £30 more than other day nursery settings in the Pontypridd area:

	Pontypridd	RCT Average (CSA 2022)	Variance
Weekly	£268.15	£221.57	+ £46.58
Full Day	£57.00	£47.85	+ £9.15
Half Day	£32.25	£30.27	+ £1.98

- 5.11 The above charges result in the Council subsidising the cost of running Pontypridd (fee paying) Day Nursery at a rate of **£17,897** per full time child place, per annum. Furthermore, this subsidy is likely to increase based on the projected demand for places (decreasing) from the Spring Term 2023.

SERVICE DELIVERY OPTIONS

- 6.1 The Council run nurseries in their current form provide limited flexibility as part of the Flying Start offer in meeting the range of childcare needs of families within the communities they serve, especially working parents requiring full-time day care provision. The alternative service delivery options set out below will provide opportunities to further improve the childcare offer, for example, through offering out of school provision and wrap-around services.
- 6.2 There is also a need for the Council to ensure there are sufficient childcare places to facilitate the roll out of the Flying Start expansion programme to all 2-3 year olds in Rhondda Cynon Taf in the coming years and to support the sector to prepare for this.

6.3 This presents an opportunity to review the current arrangements for the delivery of Council run nurseries and to consider revised service delivery options that will increase the availability of a range of childcare provision for families in local communities. In line with this, service delivery options for consideration are as follows:

6.3.1 **Option 1** - Retain the status quo

Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The flexibility of provision to meet childcare needs of parents in the locality will remain limited in the four settings i.e. working parents, wrap around care • Reduced opportunity to increase capacity in the sector to facilitate the roll out of the Flying Start Expansion programme • Potential increase in day nursery fees for fee paying children (Pontypridd Day Nursery) in order to maintain the Council's current level of subsidy
Benefits / Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No impact on staff • No impact on children and families

6.3.2 **Option 2** – Retain Flying Start provision in all four nurseries and cease the delivery of day nursery provision at Pontypridd

Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The flexibility of provision to meet childcare needs of parents in the locality will remain limited in the four settings • Reduced opportunity to increase capacity in the sector to facilitate the roll out of the Flying Start Expansion programme • Day nursery registered children currently attending Pontypridd will be required to secure alternative provision • Impact on day nursery staff at Pontypridd
Benefits / Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity of provision for Flying Start registered children • No impact on Flying Start staff • YMCA developments due to be completed by the end of the year that will see a new day nursery opening in the area, providing an alternative setting for children that currently attend Pontypridd Nursery • Improve / strengthen financial viability of local third sector day nursery providers • Potential reduction of fees (Pontypridd Day Nursery) for parents and families seeking alternative day nursery provision. • Eliminate the Council's subsidy of non-statutory day nursery provision as part of ensuring the continued efficient use of public funds

6.3.3 **Option 3** - Retain the three Flying Start nurseries in Aman, Tylorstown and Penrhys and transfer the running of the Pontypridd Nursery to an experienced registered childcare provider.

Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing an experienced registered childcare provider to transfer the running of the Pontypridd Nursery • The flexibility of Flying Start only provision to meet childcare needs of parents in the locality will remain limited in Aman, Tylorstown and Penrhys • Reduced opportunity to increase capacity in the sector to facilitate the roll out of the Flying Start Expansion programme in Aman Tylorstown and Penrhys
Benefits / Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal impact on staff at Pontypridd as they will be TUPE protected and continue to work in the sector, and no impact on Flying Start staff • More opportunity to improve and extend the range of provision available in the Pontypridd area and increase capacity in the sector to facilitate the roll out of the Flying Start Expansion programme • Continuity of provision for children / families • Improve / strengthen financial viability of local third sector day nursery providers • Potential reduction of fees (Pontypridd Day Nursery) for parents and families seeking alternative day nursery provision. • Eliminate the Council's subsidy of non-statutory day nursery provision as part of ensuring the continued efficient use of public funds

6.3.4 **Option 4** - transfer the running of all four Council run nursery settings to alternative experienced registered childcare providers

Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing experienced registered alternative childcare providers to transfer the running of the existing 4 Council run nursery settings
Benefits / Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal impact on staff as they will be TUPE protected and continue to work in the sector • More opportunity to improve and extend the range of provision available in all four areas and increase capacity in the sector to facilitate the roll out of the Flying Start Expansion programme • Increased flexibility to meet childcare needs of parents in all four localities • Continuity of provision for children / families • Improve / strengthen financial viability of local third sector day nursery providers • Potential reduction of fees (Pontypridd Day Nursery) for parents and families seeking alternative day nursery provision • Eliminate the Council's subsidy of non-statutory day nursery provision as part of ensuring the continued efficient use of public funds

- 6.4 Officers consider that doing nothing is not a viable option. Without exploring the potential for re-designing the current childcare service delivery model in Rhondda Cynon Taf, it will not be possible to improve and extend the range of childcare provision for families in local communities in line with the findings of the latest Childcare Sufficiency Assessment to support more efficient service delivery and facilitate the roll out of the Flying Start Expansion programme. Having regard to the outcome of the options analysis above, the proposed preferred option for a revised service delivery model for childcare provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf is **Option 4** – transfer the running of all four Council run nursery settings to alternative experienced registered childcare providers.
- 6.5 To assess the capacity and capability of local providers to deliver the proposed preferred option, a market testing exercise was undertaken with the Council’s nine commissioned Flying Start Childcare providers, with the process informed and supported by the Council’s Procurement Service. For Cabinet’s information, the nine commissioned providers are able to demonstrate a sound track record of delivering the services being considered as part of the exercise and also have experience of the necessary CIW registration arrangements.
- 6.6 The market testing exercise was undertaken between 30th November and 20th December 2022 where the nine providers were invited to submit an expression of interest for service transfer of one or more of the Council run nursery settings. Due to the small numbers registered in Penrhys and the close proximity of the Penrhys and Tylorstown settings, expressions of interest were sought for three potential lots: a combined Penrhys and Tylorstown; Aman; and Pontypridd. Responses were received from seven of the nine providers approached as set out in the table below (X denotes a response and – denotes no response):

Provider	Penrhys / Tylorstown	Aman	Pontypridd
A	-	X	-
B	-	-	X
C	-	X	-
D	X	X	X
E	X	-	X
F	-	X	X
G	X	X	-
H	-	-	-
I	-	-	-

- 6.7 Following this, providers were invited to meet with Council Officers to discuss their expression of interest further. Discussions were positive, focusing on the opportunities to further develop existing settings to offer a variety of childcare provision to meet local need within the area. Based on the engagement with providers, it is considered that there is sufficient capacity and capability in the local market to deliver the proposed preferred ‘Option 4 – transfer the running of all four Council run nursery settings to alternative experienced registered childcare providers.

- 6.8 Should Cabinet decide to proceed with the preferred option, a formal tender process would be undertaken based on the three lots set out in paragraph 6.6 and would include sharing financial and TUPE related information as part of the process.
- 6.9 For illustrative purposes, the table below provides key milestones and timeframes should Cabinet agree to implement the proposed preferred option (Option 4).

Key Milestones	Date(s)
Cabinet decision to implement the proposed preferred option (Option 4)	23 rd January 2023
Undertake formal tender process	1 st February 2023
Contracts awarded	31 st March 2023
Transfer arrangements implemented to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TUPE discussions • CIW registration of setting (minimum of 12 weeks) 	1 st April 2023 – 31 st August 2023
Service transfer complete	1 st September 2023

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 7.1 An Equality impact Assessment including Socio-Economic Duty screening test has been undertaken (Appendix 1) and identifies positive and neutral implications associated with implementing the proposed preferred option (Option 4).

8. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been prepared (Appendix 2) and confirms there are no negative or adverse Welsh Language implications associated with implementing the proposed preferred option (Option 4).

9. CONSULTATION / SERVICE USER/STAFF ENGAGEMENT

- 9.1 Should Cabinet decide to proceed with the preferred option (Option 4), parents and families would be kept fully informed of the process and timescales for service transfer. Following any procurement process and contract award the service would engage with all affected service users in order to address any concerns or questions they may have. There would also be opportunities for service users to meet with the new provider to discuss any queries they may have in relation to their child or the setting.
- 9.2 Similarly, staff would be kept fully informed of progress at each stage of the tender and transfer process and updated in relation to key milestones and timescales. As TUPE would apply there would be no changes to staff terms and conditions of employment, noting that support, as appropriate, would be available to staff throughout the process.

10. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

10.1 The estimated financial implication of each option is as follows:

	Options	Estimated Full Year Saving (£k)
1	Retain the Status Quo	0
2	Retain Flying Start provision in all four nurseries and cease the delivery of day nursery provision at Pontypridd	72
3	Retain the three Flying Start nurseries in Aman, Tylorstown and Penrhys and transfer the running of the Pontypridd Nursery to an experienced registered childcare provider	88
4	Transfer the running of all four Council run nursery settings to alternative experienced registered childcare providers	322

10.2 Implementing the proposed preferred option (Option 4) would deliver a saving, in a full year, of £322k, this being a higher level of saving compared to other options on the basis of efficiencies being achievable across all four settings and at the same time supporting further improvement in the local childcare offer available to families.

11. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

11.1 Under the Childcare Act 2006, section 22, the Council must, “secure, so far as it reasonably practicable, that the provision of childcare (whether or not by it) is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area who require childcare in order to enable them (a) to take up, or remain in work; or (b) to undertake education or training which would reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.”

11.2 The duties under the 2006 Act require the Council to shape and support the development of childcare provision in its area in order to make it flexible, sustainable and responsive to the needs of the community. The intention is to ensure that parents are able to access childcare locally that meets their needs and enables them to make a real choice about work. The effect of the wording “*reasonably practicable*” within the 2006 Act is to allow the Council to take into account its resources and capabilities in making decisions about when to intervene to address gaps in the childcare market.

11.3 The Council is not under a duty to provide the childcare directly (although it has the power to make provision if it so chooses). The Council is expected to support the development of childcare where there is sufficient parental demand in order that a childcare setting or a childminder could operate and be sustainable.

11.4 Regard must be given to Welsh Government Guidance when considering its statutory duty under s.22 of the 2006 Act. The particular relevant points from the Guidance in addition to the matters already set out in the Statute itself, and of relevance for this report, state that:

- i. Local authorities should consider the particular issues around access to childcare for black and other ethnic minority parents, lone parents and those making the transition to work, including those training.
- ii. Local authorities will also need to consider availability of childcare to support parents working atypical hours.
- iii. Local authorities are required to secure childcare of sufficient duration and reliability to enable parents to make a real choice about work. Local authorities are required to act to secure sufficient childcare that is registered by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW)

11.5 As part of meeting the Council's statutory duties as regards childcare, the Council has prepared its Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) 2022-2027. Members will be familiar with the contents of this document which was approved by Cabinet on 18th July 2022.

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

12.1 The provision of Flying Start childcare contributes to the Council's corporate priority that People are independent, healthy and successful, by improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do by:

- working in partnership with Welsh Government, strive to reduce child poverty, providing services that encourage and build resilience of children and their families.

12.2 This provision also supports the Council to contribute to all of the seven well-being goals:

- **A prosperous Wales:** children who receive support at the earliest opportunity are more prepared for adulthood and achieving prosperous futures.
- **A resilient Wales:** children who are given every opportunity to meet their developmental milestones and overcome barriers to developing skills are prepared with the space to grow and the tools to build resilience throughout life.
- **A healthier Wales:** access to high quality childcare supports children to meet their developmental milestones and develop social skills, enhancing their emotional wellbeing.
- **A more equal Wales:** by delivering a full range of childcare provision in all localities to meet the needs of children and parents, ensures that children and families have access to high quality childcare irrespective of where they live.
- **A Wales of cohesive Communities:** access to services that are not restricted to particular communities promotes equality and harmony across communities

and the means to share community resources in order to be responsive to need and build resilience.

- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language:** children who are given the freedom to progress through the early years in the language of their choice learn to be tolerant and accepting, preparing them for a multi-racial, globalised adult world.
- **A globally responsible Wales:** children who have access to high quality childcare opportunities are afforded experiences that prepare them to be globally responsible adults.

13. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS (please specify)

13.1 The proposed preferred option (Option 4) will increase the availability of a range of childcare provision for families in local communities, with facilities based in the wards of Aberaman, Pontypridd and Tylorstown and Ynyshir.

14. CONCLUSION

14.1 The report provides details of the current arrangements for the delivery of childcare provision at the four Council run nurseries alongside proposed revised service delivery options for consideration.

14.2 The report sets out a preferred option for Cabinet's consideration (Option 4 - transfer the running of all four Council run nursery settings to alternative experienced registered childcare providers) informed by a recent market testing exercise.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Community Services Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer
Zoe Lancelott, Head of Community Wellbeing and Resilience

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23rd JANUARY 2023

**REPORT OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS
WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR RHYS LEWIS)**

**COUNCIL RUN NURSERY PROVISION – REVISED SERVICE DELIVERY
ARRANGEMENTS**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Community Services Scrutiny Committee

Background Papers

18th July 2022 - 2022 CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT -
<https://rctcbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s36042/Report.pdf?LLL=0>

24th November 2022 Key Officer Delegated Decision Council Run Nursery Provision –
Market Testing to Inform Revised Service Delivery Arrangements

Officer to contact

Zoe Lancelott, Head of Community Wellbeing and Resilience

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM INCLUDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

(Revised March 2021)

Please refer to the current Equality Impact Assessment guidance when completing this document. If you would like further guidance please contact the Diversity and Inclusion Team on 01443 444529.

An equality impact assessment **must** be undertaken at the outset of any proposal to ensure robust evidence is considered in decision making. This documentation will support the Council in making informed, effective and fair decisions whilst ensuring compliance with a range of relevant legislation, including:

- Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010.

This document will also contribute towards our duties to create a More Equal Wales within the

- Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015.

The [‘A More Equal Wales – Mapping Duties’](#) guide highlights the alignment of our duties in respect of the above-mentioned legislation.

SECTION 1 – PROPOSAL DETAILS

Lead Officer: Mandy Perry

Service Director: Annabel Lloyd

Service Area: Children’s Services

Date: 9/11/22

1.a) What are you assessing for impact?

Strategy/Plan	Service Re-Model/Discontinuation of Service	Policy/Procedure	Practice	Information/Position Statement
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.b) What is the name of the proposal?

COUNCIL RUN NURSERY PROVISION –REVISED SERVICE DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

1.c) Please provide an overview of the proposal providing any supporting links to reports or documents.

The proposal outlines four options for service change to the existing local authority run childcare provision, with option 4 being the recommended option to ‘Seek third party providers to take over the running of all four Council run nursery settings’

If the recommended proposal (option 4) is agreed, the service change will:

- **Have minimal impact on existing staff as they will be TUPE protected**
- **Increase the opportunity to extend the range of provision available in all four areas and increase capacity in the sector to facilitate the roll out of the Flying Start Expansion programme**
- **Increased capacity and flexibility to meet childcare needs of parents in all four localities**
- **Potential for a reduction in fee's for parents and families seeking alternative day nursery provision.**

Please see attached report for further detail.

1.d) Please outline where delivery of this proposal is affected by legislation or other drivers such as code of practice.

- The Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022-2032

- Childcare Act 2006;

- Children Act 1989;

- Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.

- Equality Act 2010;

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

1.e) Please outline who this proposal affects:

- Service users
- Employees
- Wider community



SECTION 2 – SCREENING TEST – IS A FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT REQUIRED?


Screening is used to determine whether the initiative has positive, negative or neutral impacts upon protected groups. Where negative impacts are identified for protected groups then a full Equality Impact Assessment is required.


Please provide as much detail as possible of how the proposal will impact on the following groups, this may not necessarily be negative, but may impact on a group with a particular characteristic in a specific way.

Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011



The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and foster good relations between different groups. Please take an intersectional approach in recognising an individual may have more than one protected characteristic.


<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Age (<i>Specific age groups i.e. young people or older people</i>)	Positive	<p>If option 4 proceeds, as part of the service transfer to a new provider, a new service may offer provision for a wider age range of children, e.g. 0-5 year olds.</p> <p>3 of the 4 settings are only currently registered as flying start starting so are only able to offer childcare places to eligible Flying Start children aged 2-3 for 2.5 hours per day. They currently do not provide full nursery provision or wrap around childcare and are unable to offer Childcare Offer places, so are not suitable for employed parents and are</p>	 flying-start-childcare-guidance.pdf  childcare-offer-local-authority-guidance.pdf

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>not operating at their full capacity (see occupancy rate evidence table.)</p> <p>With the service change any third party providers will be encouraged to expand provision to offer a wider range of services including day nursery provision for 0-5 year olds encompassing childcare offer for 3-4 year olds and wrap around childcare.</p> <p>Expansion of the settings to include the above will be a key component of the new service specification and this element will feature within the decision process of choosing a new service provider.</p> <p>The creation of new childcare places will be monitored as part of the childcare sufficient assessment.</p>	 <p>Occupancy Rates.docx</p>
<p>Disability <i>(people with visible and non-visible disabilities or long-term health conditions)</i></p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>All settings are currently DDA compliant and accessible to children and parents with disabilities and or long term health conditions. The service change will not have any impact on the client group.</p> <p>All FS providers/settings currently accept children with physical/medical and/or emerging needs and this will continue to</p>	<p>All commissioned FS childcare providers will be contracted to provide FS funded places. Section F5 of the contract contains the following clause:</p> <p>F5.1 The Contractor shall not unlawfully discriminate within the meaning and</p>



<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>be the case following the service transfer. Where there are specific physical/medical needs of children placed in the setting the provider will be able to apply to the Council for additional funding to enhance capacity in the setting to meet the needs of the children. Additionally, all FS providers / settings are subject to monitoring and compliance visits by the Quality Assurance (QA) team.</p> <p>Disability Awareness training will be included within future EY and Childcare Workforce Development Training opportunities and all registered settings will be encouraged to enrol on the training.</p> <p>Some of the childcare places will be funded via the Families First programme which has a specific focus on disability. The guidance states:</p> <p>'The Disability element was developed to recognise that, although families with disabled children and young people, and those with young carers should be seen as an intrinsic part of the programme,</p>	<p>scope of any Law, enactment, order or regulation relating to discrimination (whether in race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age or otherwise).</p> <p>F5.2 The Contractor shall take all reasonable steps to secure the observance of Clause F5 (Discrimination) by its Staff.</p> <p> Terms Conditions for SERVICES (contra</p>


<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		sometimes, a distinct focus is required to ensure their specific needs are provided for.	
Gender Reassignment <i>(anybody who's gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex they were assigned at birth including non-binary identities)</i>	Neutral	<p>No group or protected characteristics will be positively or adversely affected by the proposed service change.</p> <p>All funded places are based on eligibility criteria in line with Welsh Government Funding eligibility criteria which does not discriminate against any protected characteristic groups. Flying Start is based on eligible postcode criteria.</p> <p>Additional Families will receive funded childcare via referral to the Resilient Families Service and based on family or child specific needs funded via Flying Start and/or Families First</p> <p>Families First guidance specifically supports</p> <p>In keeping with the principles of the UNCRC, the Welsh Government is committed to ensuring all young people fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances. In order to equip them to make an effective transition into independent adulthood</p>	<p>All commissioned FS childcare providers will be contracted to provide FS funded places. Section F5 of the contract contains the following clause:</p> <p>F5.1 The Contractor shall not unlawfully discriminate within the meaning and scope of any Law, enactment, order or regulation relating to discrimination (whether in race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age or otherwise).</p> <p>F5.2 The Contractor shall take all reasonable steps to secure the observance of Clause F5 (Discrimination) by its Staff</p>


<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>and contribute to the social and economic prosperity of Wales, young people should be encouraged, enabled and assisted to participate.</p> <p>The guidance also specifies supporting priority groups “ You will need to identify those groups who are most in need in your areas, and ensure you consider their requirements as you design and commission services. These might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled parents • Families affected by domestic abuse • Families affected by parental imprisonment • Fathers • Gypsy and Traveller families • Parents with learning difficulties (diagnosed or suspected) • Parents of disabled children • Parents with mental health problems • Parents with alcohol or substance misuse issues • Refugee/asylum seeker families • Young parents 	 <p>Terms Conditions for SERVICES (contra</p> <p>Families First Guidance</p>  <p>families-first-guidance-for-local-authori</p>
Marriage or Civil Partnership	Neutral	No group or protected characteristics will be positively or adversely affected by the proposed service change.	All commissioned FS childcare providers will be contracted to provide FS funded places.

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<i>(people who are married or in a civil partnership)</i>		Please see above for supporting priority Groups.	<p>Section F5 of the contract contains the following clause:</p> <p>F5.1 The Contractor shall not unlawfully discriminate within the meaning and scope of any Law, enactment, order or regulation relating to discrimination (whether in race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age or otherwise).</p> <p>F5.2 The Contractor shall take all reasonable steps to secure the observance of Clause F5 (Discrimination) by its Staff</p> <p> Terms Conditions for SERVICES (contra</p>
Pregnancy and Maternity <i>(women who are pregnant/on maternity leave)</i>	Positive	If option 4 proceeds, as part of the service transfer to a new provider, a new service may offer provision for a wider age range of children, e.g. 0-5 year olds.	The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE 2006) is the main piece of legislation governing the transfer

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>Neutral for staff as all terms and conditions (i.e. maternity pay and support and employment legislation) will be protected under TUPE legislation, which governs service changes. The regulations are designed to protect the rights of the employees being transferred, so that they have the same terms and conditions, with continuity of employment, as before</p> <p>Positive for service users as third party providers will be encouraged under the expression of interest to offer a wider day nursery service for 0-5 year olds.</p>	<p>of a business, or part of one, from one owner to another. It also governs service provision changes</p>
<p>Race (<i>ethnic and racial groups i.e. minority ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers</i>)</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>No group or protected characteristics will be positively or adversely affected by the proposed service change.</p> <p>All funded places are based on eligibility criteria in line with Welsh Government Funding eligibility criteria which does not discriminate against any protected characteristic groups. Flying Start is based on eligible postcode criteria.</p> <p>Additional Families will receive funded childcare via referral to the Resilient</p>	<p>All commissioned FS childcare providers will be contracted to provide FS funded places. Section F5 of the contract contains the following clause:</p> <p>F5.1 The Contractor shall not unlawfully discriminate within the meaning and scope of any Law, enactment, order or regulation relating to discrimination (whether in</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>Families Service and based on family or child specific needs funded via Flying Start and/or Families First</p> <p>The Families First guidance also specifies supporting priority groups including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gypsy and Traveller families • Refugee/asylum seeker families <p>As part of the FS monitoring data is collected and submitted to WG on a termly basis and this includes take up of FS childcare places by Ethnic minority families</p>	<p>race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age or otherwise).</p> <p>F5.2 The Contractor shall take all reasonable steps to secure the observance of Clause F5 (Discrimination) by its Staff</p> <p> Terms Conditions for SERVICES (contr</p> <p>Example FS Monitoring workbook</p> <p> 540 FS Monitoring Workbook T1 2022-</p>
<p>Religion or Belief <i>(people with different religions and philosophical beliefs including people with no beliefs)</i></p>	Neutral	<p>No group or protected characteristics will be positively or adversely affected by the proposed service change.</p> <p>All FS settings raise awareness of different cultures, religions or beliefs and</p>	<p>All commissioned FS childcare providers will be contracted to provide FS funded places. Section F5 of the contract contains the following clause:</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>this is included within the settings curriculum planning and monitored via the Quality Assurance team. Key dates such as Diwali are celebrated via children tasting different foods, arts and crafts, dance and via story telling.</p> <p>Multicultural resources such as dolls and books are also available within all FS settings.</p>	<p>F5.1 The Contractor shall not unlawfully discriminate within the meaning and scope of any Law, enactment, order or regulation relating to discrimination (whether in race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age or otherwise).</p> <p>F5.2 The Contractor shall take all reasonable steps to secure the observance of Clause F5 (Discrimination) by its Staff</p> <p> Terms Conditions for SERVICES (contr</p>
<p>Sex <i>(women and men, girls and boys)</i></p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>All staff are currently female, but this protected characteristic is not positively or adversely affected by the proposed service change.</p>	<p>All commissioned FS childcare providers will be contracted to provide FS funded places. Section F5 of the contract contains the following clause:</p> <p>F5.1 The Contractor shall not unlawfully discriminate</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<p>within the meaning and scope of any Law, enactment, order or regulation relating to discrimination (whether in race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age or otherwise).</p> <p>F5.2 The Contractor shall take all reasonable steps to secure the observance of Clause F5 (Discrimination) by its Staff</p>  <p>Terms Conditions for SERVICES (contræ</p>
<p>Sexual Orientation <i>(bisexual, gay, lesbian, straight)</i></p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>No group or protected characteristics will be positively or adversely affected by the proposed service change.</p> <p>All funded places are based on eligibility criteria in line with Welsh Government Funding eligibility criteria which does not discriminate against any protected</p>	<p>All commissioned FS childcare providers will be contracted to provide FS funded places. Section F5 of the contract contains the following clause:</p> <p>F5.1 The Contractor shall not unlawfully discriminate within the meaning and scope of any Law,</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		characteristic groups including sexual orientation of the parents/carers.	<p>enactment, order or regulation relating to discrimination (whether in race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age or otherwise).</p> <p>F5.2 The Contractor shall take all reasonable steps to secure the observance of Clause F5 (Discrimination) by its Staff</p>

In addition, due to Council commitments made to the following groups of people we would like you to consider impacts upon them:

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Armed Forces Community <i>(anyone who is serving, has served, family members and the bereaved)</i>	Neutral	<p>No group of protected characteristics will be positively or adversely affected by the proposed service change.</p> <p>All funded places are based on eligibility criteria in line with Welsh Government Funding</p>	<p>All commissioned FS childcare providers will be contracted to provide FS funded places. Section F5 of the contract contains the following clause:</p> <p>F5.1 The Contractor shall not unlawfully discriminate</p>

		<p>eligibility criteria which does not discriminate against any protected characteristic groups. Flying Start is based on eligible postcode criteria and Families First is based on wider needs of the family following referral to RFS including needs of the child based on their development.</p> <p>Any family can be referred or self refer to RFS for additional support which may or may not include funded childcare, and this includes current or former armed forces families.</p>	<p>within the meaning and scope of any Law, enactment, order or regulation relating to discrimination (whether in race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age or otherwise).</p> <p>F5.2 The Contractor shall take all reasonable steps to secure the observance of Clause F5 (Discrimination) by its Staff</p>
<p>Carers <i>(anyone of any age who provides unpaid care)</i></p>	Neutral	<p>If option 4 proceeds, the transfer of service and subsequent provision of day nurseries will provide more opportunities for parents/carers to take up or remain in work due to the extended opening hours and possibility of full year provision.</p>	<p>Positive for service users as third-party providers will be encouraged under the expression of interest to offer a wider day nursery service for 0-5 year olds, which will include the funded childcare offer for eligible children.</p>

If the initial screening test has identified negative impacts then a full equality impact assessment (section 4) **must** be undertaken. However, if after undertaking the above screening test you determine a full equality impact assessment is not relevant please provide an adequate explanation below:

Are you happy you have sufficient evidence to justify your decision?

Yes

No

Name: Mandy Perry

Position: Programme Alignment Manager

Date: 09/11/22

Please forward a copy of this completed screening form to the Diversity and Inclusion Team.

PLEASE NOTE – there is a separate impact assessment for Welsh Language. This must also be completed for proposals.

Section 3 Socio-economic Duty needs only to be completed if proposals are of a strategic nature or when reviewing previous strategic decisions. Definition of a 'strategic nature' is available on page 6 of the Preparing for the Commencement of the Socio-economic Duty Welsh Government Guidance.





SECTION 3 – SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY (STRATEGIC DECISIONS ONLY)



The Socio-economic Duty gives us an opportunity to do things differently and put tackling inequality genuinely at the heart of key decision making. Socio-economic disadvantage means living on a low income compared to others in Wales, with little or no accumulated wealth, leading to greater material deprivation, restricting the ability to access basic goods and services.

Please consider these additional vulnerable groups and the impact your proposal may or may not have on them:

- Single parents and vulnerable families
- Pensioners
- Looked after children
- Homeless people
- Students
- Single adult households

- People living in the most deprived areas in Wales
- People with low literacy and numeracy
- People who have experienced the asylum system
- People misusing substances
- People of all ages leaving a care setting
- People involved in the criminal justice system



<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Low Income/<u>Income Poverty</u> <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i>	Positive	<p>If option 4 proceeds, the transfer of service and subsequent provision of day nurseries will provide more opportunities for parents/carers to take up or remain in work due to the extended opening hours and possibility of full year provision. There will also be an increase in the number of childcare spaces available. Settings will also be encouraged to offer spaces to parents requiring the 30 hour childcare offer for 3-4 year olds.</p> <p>Potential reduction of fees for parents and families seeking alternative day nursery provision.</p>	<p>See section 6.3.4 of the Delegated Decision report.</p> <p> COUNCILRUNNURSERYPROVISION-MARK</p> <p> childcare-offer-local-authority-guidanc</p>
Low and / or No Wealth <i>(enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provisions for the future)</i>	Positive	<p>If option 4 proceeds, the transfer of service and subsequent provision of day nurseries will provide more opportunities for parents/carers to take up or remain in work due to the extended opening hours and possibility of full year provision. There will also be an increase in the number of childcare spaces available. Settings will also be encouraged to offer spaces to parents requiring the 30 hour childcare offer for 3-4 year olds.</p>	<p>See section 6.3.4 of the Delegated Decision report.</p> <p> COUNCILRUNNURSERYPROVISION-MARK</p> <p> childcare-offer-local-authority-guidanc</p>

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		Potential reduction of fees for parents and families seeking alternative day nursery provision.	
<u>Material Deprivation</u> <i>(unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.)</i>	Positive	<p>If option 4 proceeds, the transfer of service and subsequent provision of day nurseries will provide more opportunities for parents/carers to take up or remain in work due to the extended opening hours and possibility of full year provision. There will also be an increase in the number of childcare spaces available. Settings will also be encouraged to offer spaces to parents requiring the 30 hour childcare offer for 3-4 year olds</p> <p>Potential reduction of fees for parents and families seeking alternative day nursery provision.</p>	<p>See section 6.3.4 of the Delegated Decision report.</p> <p> COUNCILRUNNURSERYPROVISION-MARK</p> <p> childcare-offer-local-authority-guidance</p>

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<u>Area Deprivation</u> <i>(where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport))</i>	Positive	All four settings are within the most deprived LSOAs including Tylorstown, Penrhys, Aberaman and Pontypridd. Therefore the expansion of provision in terms of spaces and age range will	<p><u>WIMD, 2019 (overall):</u> Tylorstown and Penrhys nurseries are both flying start areas which is ranked 4 out of 1909 LSOAs in Wales, which</p>

		<p>benefit these communities; the transfer of service and subsequent provision of day nurseries will provide more opportunities for parents/carers to take up or remain in work due to the extended opening hours and possibility of full year provision. There will also be an increase in the number of childcare spaces available. Settings will also be encouraged to offer spaces to parents requiring the 30-hour childcare offer for 3-4 year olds</p> <p>Potential reduction of fees for parents and families seeking alternative day nursery provision.</p>	<p>places it among the 10% most deprived.</p> <p>Aman Nursery is within the Aberaman South 1 flying start area which is ranked 413 out of 1909 LSOAs in Wales, which places it among the 20-30% most deprived.</p> <p>Pontypridd Day Nursery includes Graig 2 flying start LSOA which is ranked 268 out of 1909 LSOAs in Wales, which places it among the 10-20% most deprived areas.</p>
<p>Socio-economic background <i>(social class i.e. parents education, employment and income)</i></p>	Positive	<p>There will be increased opportunities for both working and unemployed parents as the expansion of provision will offer both flying start places and the childcare offer for eligible children.</p>	<p><u>WIMD, 2019:</u></p> <p>Tylorstown and Penrhys nurseries are both flying start areas which are ranked:</p> <p><u>Employment:</u> 11 out of 1909 LSOAs in Wales, which places them among the 10% most deprived areas</p> <p><u>Education:</u> 33 out of 1909 LSOAs in Wales, which places them among the 10% most deprived</p> <p><u>Income:</u> 7 out of 1909 LSOAs in Wales, which places them among the 10% most deprived</p>

			<p>Aman Nursery is within the Aberaman South 1 flying start area which is ranked:</p> <p><u>Employment:</u> 281 out of 1909 LSOAs in Wales, which places them among the 10-20 % most deprived.</p> <p><u>Education:</u> 469 out of 1909 LSOAs in Wales, which places them among the 20-30% most deprived</p> <p><u>Income:</u> 322 out of 1909 LSOAs in Wales, which places them among the 10-20% most deprived</p> <p>Pontypridd Day Nursery includes Graig 2 flying start LSOA which is ranked:</p> <p><u>Employment:</u> 250 out of 1909 LSOAs in Wales, which places them among the 10-20 % most deprived.</p> <p><u>Education:</u> 283 out of 1909 LSOAs in Wales, which places them among the 10-20% most deprived</p> <p><u>Income:</u> 410 out of 1909 LSOAs in Wales, which places them among the 20-30% most deprived</p>
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<p>Socio-economic disadvantage <i>(What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>If option 4 proceeds, the transfer of service and subsequent provision of day nurseries will provide more opportunities for parents/carers to take up or remain in work due to the extended opening hours and possibility of full year provision. There will also be an increase in the number of childcare spaces available. Settings will also be encouraged to offer spaces to parents requiring the 30 hour childcare offer for 3-4 year olds.</p> <p>Potential reduction of fees for parents and families seeking alternative day nursery provision.</p>	<p>See section 6.3.4 of the Delegated Decision report.</p> <p> COUNCILRUNNURSERYPROVISION-MARK</p> <p> childcare-offer-local-authority-guidance</p>
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SECTION 4 – FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

You should use the information gathered at the screening stage to assist you in identifying possible negative/adverse impacts and clearly identify which groups are affected.

- 4.a) In terms of disproportionate/negative/adverse impacts that the proposal may have on a protected group, outline the steps that will be taken to reduce or mitigate the impact for each group identified. **Attach a separate action plan where impacts are substantial.**
- 4.b) If ways of reducing the impact have been identified but are not possible, please explain why they are not possible.
- 4.c) Give sufficient detail of data or research that has led to your reasoning, in particular, the sources used for establishing the demographics of service users/staff.
- 4.d) Give details of how you engaged with service users/staff on the proposals and the steps taken to avoid any disproportionate impact on a protected group. Explain how you have used feedback to influence your decision.
- 4.e) Are you satisfied that the engagement process complies with the requirements of the Statutory Equality and Socio-economic Duties?
- Yes No

SECTION 5 – MONITORING, EVALUATING AND REVIEWING

5a) Please outline below how the implementation of the proposal will be monitored:

The service transfer itself will be monitored to ensure that the transfer takes place efficiently and effectively with minimal disruption for the staff employed at the settings and for the children and families using the setting. Estimate transfer dates will be pre-agreed and all interested parties will be notified.

Following the service transfer, the settings will continue to be monitored against their quality of provision and children's outcomes by the Childcare Quality Assurance Team; and monitoring of contracts including compliance of Welsh language standards will be undertaken via the Funding Flexibility Monitoring Officers.

Take up of Flying Start childcare places, attendance, ethnicity of children etc. will be monitored on a termly basis and reported to WG as per the conditions of the funding.

5b) When is the evaluation of the proposal due to be reviewed?

No formal review is planned, ongoing performance monitoring will be undertaken as part of the FS contractual requirements of all providers.

5c) Who is responsible for the monitoring and review of the proposal?

The Programme Alignment Team are responsible for ongoing monitoring and review of all commissioned providers to ensure the providers are meeting their contractual obligations which includes the quality of provision.

5d) How will the results of the monitoring be used to develop future proposals?

Ongoing monitoring is undertaken to ensure the childcare meets the expected quality assurance standards and to ensure that there is sufficient childcare available to meet the needs of families. Where there are concerns around quality then the QA team will work with the setting and implement an improvement plan with monitored timescales against

actions. Failure to improve or comply with any standards may result in the contract being terminate and an alternate provider sought. Birth data is also used to inform future planning to ensure there is sufficient provision available to meet demand for places. Additional approved suppliers will be sought in areas of increased demand via the 'approved providers list.'

SECTION 6 – REVIEW

For all policy proposals, whether it is a Significant Key Decision or not, you are required to forward this assessment to Diversity and Inclusion team – equality@rctcbc.gov.uk and the Consultation and Engagement team – consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk in the first instance for some initial guidance and feedback.

As part of the Welsh Language, Equalities and Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment Process all proposals that fall within the definition of Significant Key Decision should present at the Officer Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your report is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.

If this proposal is a Key Strategic Decision please forward your completed impact assessment, policy proposal/report and consultation report to CouncilBusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk for an Officer Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. See our guidance document for more information on what a Significant Key Decision is.

It is important to keep a record of this process so that we can demonstrate how we have considered and built in equality/Socio economic considerations wherever possible. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below in collaboration with the relevant departments

Diversity and Inclusion team Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation
Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It was noted that most staff affected by the proposals are female;• Overall, the content and evidence within the Impact Assessment was praised.	12-01-23	

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SECTION 7 – SUMMARY OF IMPACTS FOR THE PROPOSAL

Provide below a summary of the impact assessment, to include some of the main positive and negative impacts along with an overview of actions taken since the impact assessment to better contribute to more positive impacts. This summary must be included in the Equality Considerations section of the SLT/Cabinet report template. It is not suitable to only write 'please see full report at Appendix x' in the body of the report. The impact assessment must be published alongside the report.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and the main findings are as follows:-

- The proposal has no negative impacts.
- The proposal has positive impacts in the following areas:
Age, Pregnancy and maternity, low income / income poverty; low and/or no wealth; material deprivation; area deprivation; socio-economic background; socio-economic disadvantage.
- The proposal has neutral impacts in the following areas:
Disability; gender reassignment; marriage or civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; armed forces community; carers.

SECTION 8 – AUTHORISATIONS

Lead Officer:

Name: Mandy Perry

Position: Programme Alignment Manager

Date: 10 January 2023

I recommend that the proposal:

- Is implemented with no amendments
- Is implemented taking into account the mitigating actions outlined
- Is rejected due to disproportionate negative impacts on protected groups or socio-economic disadvantage

Head of Service/Director Approval:

Name: Annabel Lloyd

Position: Director Children's Services

Date: 10 January 2023

Please submit this impact assessment with any SLT/Cabinet Reports.

WELSH LANGUAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOL

This Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIS) tool enables RCT Council to consider the principles and requirements of the [Welsh Language Standards \(No.1\) Regulations 2015](#) to ensure compliance with the [Welsh Language \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#).

Stage 1 – Information Gathering

NOTE: As you complete this tool you will be asked for **evidence to support your views**. Please see [Welsh Language Impact Assessment Guidance](#) for more information on data sources.

Proposal Name:	COUNCIL RUN NURSERY PROVISION –REVISED SERVICE DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS
Department	Children’s Services
Service Director	Annabel Lloyd
Officer Completing the WLIA	Mandy Perry
Email	Mandy.perry@rctcbc.gov.uk
Phone	07956033222
Brief Description	<p>The proposal outlines four options for service change to the existing local authority run childcare provision, with option 4 being the recommended option to ‘Seek third party providers to take over the running of all four English Council run nursery settings’</p> <p>New commissioning arrangements are already in place for Welsh medium provision and the Council have recently increased from 9 to 19 Welsh approved suppliers, so the proposal is for these settings to remain as English settings to meet current demand within the existing geographical areas.</p> <p>If the recommended proposal (option 4) is agreed, the service change will:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have minimal impact on existing staff as they will be TUPE protected • Increase the opportunity to extend the range of provision available in all four areas and increase capacity in the sector to facilitate the roll out of the Flying Start Expansion programme • Increase capacity and flexibility to meet childcare needs of parents in all four localities • Potential for a reduction in fee's for parents and families seeking alternative day nursery provision. • Ensure the third party provider complies to all relevant Welsh language standards as a condition of their contractual arrangements • Be subject to regular quality assurance monitoring and annual compliance monitoring which includes specific monitoring around compliance of the Welsh Language Standards.
Date	7 th November 2022
Please outline who this proposal affects? (Service Users, Employees, Wider Community)	<p>The proposal will affect staff who will TUPE transfer.</p> <p>The proposal will positively affect the wider local communities of Tylorstown; Penrhys; Aberaman and Pontypridd via an increase in a wider availability of childcare within the areas.</p> <p>Service users will not be impacted since there will be no change to their current provision</p> <p>The Council have already identified the need for more Welsh Medium pre school provision within the Pontypridd area and are currently investigating the possibility of the existing Pontypridd English Setting either being split to allow space for two sessions English and Welsh or there is a possibility that the setting could become Welsh only but this would be subject to providing a suitable provider via the EOI process and negotiating the TUPE of staff since only 2 of the staff are currently fluent in welsh. This option would align to the Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP) OUTCOME 1: MORE NURSERY / THREE YEAR OLD LEARNERS RECEIVE THEIR EDUCATION THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH since it would increase the number of children attending Welsh medium pre-school settings which would lead to more children accessing Welsh medium education.</p>

What are the aims of the policy, and how do these relate to the Welsh Language?

The four childcare settings that this service change relate to are all English childcare settings, although all must offer an element of Welsh as part of the curriculum and all settings must also comply with the relevant sections of the Welsh language standards as per their contracts and these are monitored by the Quality Assurance Childcare team and the Funding Flexibilities Team Monitoring Officers. The service transfer will not impact on these requirements.

Following review of access to childcare, all FS eligible families now receive a letter confirming their eligibility and an application for childcare form which they complete and return to the Placement Advisory Officer. Parents are encouraged to stipulate language preference on the application form.

In line with the Welsh Language Standards and the WG policy 'A Million Welsh Speakers 2015' RCT have increased the number of Welsh Medium childcare places available to families and 50% of Approved Suppliers are now Welsh medium along with 25% of all commissioned settings. This will continue to be reviewed to ensure we are able to meet future language demand. Where applicable additional approved suppliers will be Welsh language provision.

Although the childcare offer is made in the language of choice stipulated on the childcare application, some families still decline the offer and opt for the nearest setting or preferred session availability before their chosen language.

A review of the childcare commissioning model took place in 21/22 to ensure that commissioned childcare places are at the correct level, in the right areas and meet the needs of families including the choice of language.

As part of the review of the commissioning model, it was agreed that it was difficult to assess the Welsh medium provision as this was not evenly distributed across the authority. To address this an Approved Provider List for Flying Start childcare was developed. Several considerations were made for this process which included evidence of the use of the Welsh language and the level to which the staff are fluent. The tender also requested settings can demonstrate how they immerse the children in Welsh culture. By having Welsh language settings across the authority, who also meet Flying Start childcare standards, it is hoped that there will be an increase in the uptake of Welsh medium places. This approach directly supports the WESP 10 year- strategic plan as it aims to identify some of the barriers to access, which include location of a setting.

Since the above review Welsh FS Approved Settings has already increased from 9 settings to 19 settings.

Who will benefit / Could the policy affect Welsh language groups? If so, list them here.

There will be no direct benefit or impact on any Welsh language groups since the service change relates to English childcare settings only. Parents requiring Welsh provision would not be offered the settings that are impacted by this service change they would be offered alternative provision within their local area..

Current linguistic profile of the geographical area(s) concerned

EDUCATION THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH

The data in the table that follows is derived from the Local Authority's CSA for the period between 2022 to 2027. It demonstrates the total number of registered and unregistered Welsh and English medium childcare and early years settings alongside the number of places available across the County Borough.

Total Number of Welsh and English Medium Childcare and Early Years Settings Available Across the County Borough					
Childcare Type		Total Number of Registered Settings	Total Number of Places	Total Number of Unregistered Settings	Total Number of Places
Childminder		96	778	0	0
Day Care	Full Day Care	56	2,030	0	0
	Sessional Day Care	25	75	7	25
	Crèches	0	0	0	0
	Out of School Care	10	357	6	0
	Open Access Play Provision	5	345	3	0
	Nanny	2	0	0	0
Total		194	3,585	16	25

The following table indicates the linguistic profile for the geographical areas where the settings within the report are located:

Community	Population over 3 years	Number of Welsh speakers	% of Welsh speakers
Tylorstown/Penrhys	4,368	443	10.1
Aberaman	9,411	870	9.2
Pontypridd	31,538	3,978	12.6

“Updated following review panel on 12.01.23 to reflect 2021 Census figures:

Recently released 2021 Census figures regarding the Welsh language show that the anticipated increase in Welsh speakers across Wales as a whole has not been realised. The all-Wales figured showed a decrease in the percentage of Welsh speakers to 17.8% percent. There was a small increase in RCT, however – the percentage of our population who can speak Welsh increased from 12.3% to 12.4%, and we saw a 2.8% increase in the number of Welsh speakers in the county borough (from 27779 to 28556). RCT was also one of only four LAs in Wales to see an increase in the percentage of Welsh speakers – the others were Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan and Merthyr Tudful, all neighbouring county boroughs, which could demonstrate that our region is seeing some positive trends in terms of increases in Welsh speakers, and that there may be a resulting increase for services through the medium of Welsh. As further, more detailed data from the Census becomes available for RCT (e.g. LSOA data), we will need to consider how it may impact the services we provide.”

Other relevant data or research

WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN – 2022 TO 2032:

The data in the table that follows, again derived from the Local Authority’s CSA for the period between 2022 to 2027, demonstrates the total number of registered and unregistered Welsh medium childcare and early years settings (both Welsh medium and bilingual) alongside the number of places available across the County Borough

Total Number of Welsh Medium Childcare and Early Years Settings Available Across the County Borough					
Childcare Type		Total Number of Registered Settings	Total Number of Places	Total Number of Unregistered Settings	Total Number of Places
Childminder		1	25	0	0
Day Care	Full Day Care	10	599	0	0
	Sessional Day Care	5	177	0	0
	Crèches	0	0	0	0
	Out of School Care	3	144	5	Unknown
Total		26	771	5	0

Flying Start

The Council is committed to providing childcare to families eligible for the WGs Flying Start Programme (FSP). As one of the four pillars of the WGs FSP, childcare is a key component, giving eligible families with children between the ages of two to three free childcare for two and a half hours a day, five days a week for thirty nine weeks of the year. An element of FSP childcare is provided by the four Council run settings impacted by the **Proposed Changes to the Council Run Day Nursery Service Report** however these are all English settings since there are alternate Welsh medium settings available:

Clych Meithrin Aberdare covers the Aberaman area

Clych Meithrin Ynyshir and Wattstown cover the Tylorstown/Penrhys area.

Clych Meithrin Rhydyfelen and Cylch Meithrin Ynysybwl for the Pontypridd area

The vast majority of FSP childcare is currently being provided by commissioned childcare and early years settings. In 2020/21, approximately 25.0% of FSP childcare commissioned was through the medium of Welsh.

A total of 686 FSP childcare places were commissioned from 32 childcare and early years settings. In total, 77.3% (530) of FSP childcare English medium places were commissioned via 23 childcare and early years settings whilst 22.7% (156) of FSP childcare Welsh medium places were commissioned via 9 childcare and early years settings. The total 156 Welsh medium childcare places originally commissioned only 58.9% (92) were filled. This suggests that the Welsh medium childcare places commissioned were not in the correct localities, hence, there was a requirement to purchase an additional 34 Welsh medium FSP childcare places (taking the total number of Welsh medium childcare places commissioned to 190). In total, 19.1% (126) of children attending FSP childcare were attending a Welsh medium childcare and early years settings.

Following the above a new FSP commissioning model was instigated in 2022 and Welsh medium places are no longer commissioned on a bulk purchase basis. Instead, the FSP team work closely with childcare settings to spot purchase places as and when they are required and have increased the number of settings available to offer FSP. As such, we currently have 19 settings available to deliver services through the medium of Welsh. The changes to the commissioning process will mean more Welsh medium FSP childcare places are available to those families that choose it and offer far wider geographical coverage than the previous model where there were only 9 commissioned settings throughout RCT.

As at November 2022, an additional 10 Welsh medium FSP childcare settings have become approved providers which will improve the geographical coverage of FSP across RCT and provide better parental choice. The new model has only been active for 1 term but has already shows 14% of new places were requested in Welsh medium settings which is a large increase on the previous term (7 places requested) but is still a low number of requests.

The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on all Local Authorities to secure, as far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient childcare and early years settings for parents/carers who require childcare to work, undertake training or education or to prepare for work. Local Authorities have a lead role in facilitating the childcare market to ensure it meets the needs of parents/carers, particularly those on low incomes, those with children with ALN or those who wish for their children to attend Welsh medium childcare and early years settings.

Under the Act, each Local Authority is required to prepare a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) to gain an understanding on the provision in the area and to develop an action plan to address any gaps identified. Using data derived for the Local Authority's Child Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) for the period 2022 to 2027, an Action Plan was devised. Included in the Action Plan is the overarching goal to support the aims of the

WESP in order to increase transition rates from Welsh medium childcare to Welsh medium education. As a result of this, six main priorities were identified in relation to Welsh medium childcare and early years settings:

- Engage with, and support, unregistered, Welsh medium, out of school care providers to register with CIW and extend services to provide holiday care in areas of identified demand.
- Explore the demand for new Cylchoedd Meithrin in geographical areas identified via the mapping exercise
- Investigate possible gaps in Welsh medium sessional and full day care in South Rhondda.
- Offer support and training to non-confident Welsh speakers to encourage use of the Welsh language in their settings and to promote themselves as Welsh medium or bilingual settings.
- Promote the Flying Start Active Offer to settings and encourage participation.
- Undertake a promotion campaign to attract more Welsh speaking childminders.

Stage 2 – Impact Assessment


In this section you need to consider the impact, the evidence and any action you are taking for improvement. This is to ensure that the opportunities for people who choose to live their lives and access services through the medium of Welsh are not inferior to what is afforded to those choosing to do so in English, in accordance with the requirement of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.



Please note there is a separate impact assessment for Equality and Socio-Economic duty that must also be completed for policy proposals.

Remember that effects that are positive for some groups could be detrimental to others - even among Welsh language groups. Consider the effects on different groups. For example, a proposal may be beneficial to Welsh learners, but not to Welsh speakers.

Previous Welsh Language Impact Assessments can be found on Inform by [clicking here](#).

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?


	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>Opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language</p> <p>e.g. staff, residents and visitors</p> <p>The rights of Welsh speakers and learners to use Welsh when dealing</p>	Neutral	Since the service change will impact on English settings only there will be no change to the staff or curriculum hence occasional Welsh will still be used within the settings and the settings will still have to comply with the Welsh language standards as a	<p>The embedded Service Specification references the Welsh Language standards for this service.</p> <p> Flying Start Childcare Service Sp</p> <p>See embedded QA scheme which references Welsh language requirements within section QLO 11 and QLO 12 and Welsh Language Standards Annual Audit checklist.</p>	The settings could increase the amount of Welsh spoken within the settings and increase the availability of Welsh Language resources (children's books etc)and signage.


<p>with the council and for staff to use Welsh at Work</p>		<p>condition of their contract . These will continue to be monitored by the Funding Flexibility and Quality Assurance Teams.</p> <p>The Council have identified a potential need for more Welsh Medium pre school provision within the Pontypridd area and are currently investigating the possibility of the existing Pontypridd English Setting either being split to allow space for two sessions English and Welsh or there is a possibility that the setting could become Welsh only but this would be subject to providing a suitable provider via the EOI process and negotiating the TUPE of staff since only 2 of the staff are currently fluent in welsh.</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">   </div> <p>QA scheme new WELSH LANGUAGE format Sept 22 (ameSTANDARDS AUDIT</p> <p>This option would align to the Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP) OUTCOME 1: MORE NURSERY / THREE YEAR OLD LEARNERS RECEIVE THEIR EDUCATION THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF WELSH since it would increase the number of children attending Welsh medium pre-school settings which would lead to more children accessing Welsh medium education.</p>	<p>This will be included within future QA action plans.</p> <p>Discussions to take place with Muddiad Meithrin over the possibility of the Pontypridd setting becoming Welsh medium provision under a new provider</p>
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Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?												
<p>Numbers and / or percentages of Welsh speakers e.g Welsh Medium Education / Study Opportunities. Links with the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Strategy / RCTCBC Five Year Welsh Language Strategy</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>The settings impacted by the service change are all English settings. Parents requesting Welsh medium provision will be allocated places within Welsh settings however a proportion of the setting staff do speak Welsh.</p>	<p>All staff employed at the settings have a basic understanding and can use simple Welsh phrases to converse with the children. Only 4 staff are fluent Welsh speakers:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="938 802 1912 997"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Aman</th> <th>Pontypridd</th> <th>Tylorstown</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Fluent</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Basic phrases</td> <td>7</td> <td>5</td> <td>4</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>There are already established Welsh medium sessional childcare providers within the areas covered by the existing settings:</p> <p>Clych Meithrin Aberdare covers the Aberaman area Clych Meithrin Ynyshir and Wattstown cover the Tylorstown/Penrhys area. Clych Meithrin Rhydyfelen and Clych Meithrin Ynysybwl for the Pontypridd area</p>		Aman	Pontypridd	Tylorstown	Fluent	1	2	0	Basic phrases	7	5	4	<p>As a mitigation the Council will undertake discussions with Mudiad Meithrin around the</p>
	Aman	Pontypridd	Tylorstown													
Fluent	1	2	0													
Basic phrases	7	5	4													




			<p>This is also a Cylch Meithrin in Evans James School but they are not currently interested in becoming a FSP.</p> <p>Numbers and Percentage of Welsh Speakers by Community where the settings are located, based on the population over 3 years and Number of Welsh speakers % of Welsh speakers</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Community</th> <th>Population over 3 years</th> <th>Number of Welsh speakers</th> <th>% of Welsh speakers</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Tylorstown/Penrhys</td> <td>4,368</td> <td>443</td> <td>10.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Aberaman</td> <td>9,411</td> <td>870</td> <td>9.2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pontypridd</td> <td>31,538</td> <td>3,978</td> <td>12.6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Community	Population over 3 years	Number of Welsh speakers	% of Welsh speakers	Tylorstown/Penrhys	4,368	443	10.1	Aberaman	9,411	870	9.2	Pontypridd	31,538	3,978	12.6	<p>feasibility of the Pontypridd Day Nursery being transferred to a Welsh Provider.</p>
Community	Population over 3 years	Number of Welsh speakers	% of Welsh speakers																	
Tylorstown/Penrhys	4,368	443	10.1																	
Aberaman	9,411	870	9.2																	
Pontypridd	31,538	3,978	12.6																	
<p>Opportunities to promote the Welsh language e.g. status, use of Welsh language services, use of Welsh in everyday life in work and in the community</p> <p>Actively encourage and promote the use of our services in Welsh to see an increase in demand over time</p>	Neutral	<p>The settings are English settings, Parents requesting Welsh medium provision will be allocated places within English settings.</p> <p>From next term all parents will be sent a Being Bilingual leaflet with their FS childcare registration form when the child is 18 months old. Similar posters have</p>	 <p>Being Bilingual - Rhondda Cynon Taf</p>	<p>All settings will be encouraged to increase the amount of Welsh spoken within the settings and to increase the availability of Welsh Language resources</p>																

	<p>also been printed to place around the community.</p> <p>If the above leads to an increased demand for Welsh medium childcare places the children will be accommodated within the new FS approved Welsh suppliers which will continue to expand as new settings are being developed under the 21st Century Schools developments outlined in the WESP.</p>	<p>CSA Action plan 2022-32 'Ensure that every Welsh medium primary school within the County Borough will have a Welsh medium childcare and early years setting co-located on the primary school site, or within walking distance, to provide a seamless transition from early years to Welsh medium statutory education.'</p> <p> WESPJune2022.pdf</p>	<p>(children's books etc)and signage. This will be included within future QA action plans</p>
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Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>Compliance with the Council's Statutory Welsh Language Standards</p>	Neutral	All settings currently comply with the relevant Welsh language requirements which are a	The embedded Service Specification references the Welsh Language standards for this service.	All settings will be encouraged to increase the amount of Welsh spoken within the

<p>e.g increasing or reducing the Council's ability to deliver services through the Medium of Welsh.</p> <p>Consider the rights of Welsh speakers to use Welsh when dealing with the Council and for staff to use Welsh at Work</p>		<p>contractual obligation and these are monitored for compliancy on an annual basis by the Funding Flexibilities Team.</p>	<p> Flying Start Childcare Service Sp</p> <p>See embedded Welsh language Standards Audit which is undertaken annually per setting via the Monitoring Officer.</p> <p> WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS AUDIT</p>	<p>settings and to increase the availability of Welsh Language resources (children's books etc) and signage. This will be included within future QA action plans.</p> <p>Settings will also be encouraged to ensure all signage to be bilingual, with Welsh first, and making the Welsh text on signs bigger/more prominent.</p>
<p>Treating the Welsh language, no less favourably than the English language</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>All families are already offered a child care place within their preferred language choice.</p>	<p> APPLICATION - form for parent BLANK.doc</p> <p>The childcare Registration form shows where parents are offered a choice of language</p> <p>The Approved Provider List has focused on increasing Welsh Medium provision and this has been achieved through the work undertaken with Mudiad Meithrin. This included a view from them in relation to the Welsh Language skills level for staff in Welsh medium settings.</p>	<p>As part of the FS Childcare recommissioning model the Council worked closely with Mudiad meithrin to encourage all Welsh registered childcare settings to become FS approved suppliers to offer a better geographical coverage of provision thus offering more choice of provision to ensure parents wanting Welsh language provision were treated no less favourable. This has increased the number of</p>



Welsh approved providers from 9 to 19 and it continues to increase.

Stage 3 - Strengthening the proposal

Having listed actions in section 2 which may mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts – please record below which ones you will imbed into the policy proposal and who will be responsible for them.

Also consider is the proposal necessary? Would it be possible to meet demand without any new developments? Could other existing provision be used? Where should the development be?

What are you going to do?	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible?
The Funding Flexibilities team are continuing to actively encourage all Welsh childcare settings to become Flying Start approved providers and are working collaboratively with the Councils Procurement team to provide support to navigate through the procurement process and have also provided support sessions on a group and 1:1 basis.	Ongoing	Programme Alignment Manager
Being Bilingual flyers and posters have been designed and printed and will start to be issued this term.	Commence November 2022 flyers will be issued to all Flying Start eligible children at 18 months.	Programme Alignment Manager
The new providers will be encouraged to increase the amount of Welsh spoken within the settings and increase the availability of Welsh Language resources (children’s books etc)and signage. This will be included within future QA action plans and monitored.	From November 2022 for existing providers	Quality Assurance Team
Discuss the possibility of the existing Pontypridd English setting becoming Welsh provision with Mudiad Meithrin	November 2022	Programme Alignment Manager

If ways of reducing the impact have been identified but are not possible to implement, please explain why. Give sufficient detail of data or research that has led to your reasoning.

What was identified?	Why is it not possible?

Stage 4 – Review

For all policy proposals, whether it is a Significant Key Decision or not, you are required to forward this assessment to Welsh Language services – welshlanguageofficer@rctcbc.gov.uk and the Consultation and Engagement team – consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk in the first instance for some initial guidance and feedback.

As part of the Welsh Language, Equalities and Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment Process all proposals that fall within the definition of Significant Key Decision should present at the Officer Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your report is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.

If this proposal is a Key Strategic Decision please forward your completed (Stage 1>6) impact assessment, policy proposal/report and consultation report to CouncilBusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk for an Officer Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. [See our guidance document](#) for more information on what a Significant Key Decision is.

It is important to keep a record of this process so that we can demonstrate how we have considered and built in sustainable Welsh language considerations wherever possible. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below in collaboration with the relevant departments.

Welsh Language Services Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Welsh Language Services feedback
<p>Welsh Language Services thank you for preparing a detailed WLIA assessment with many supporting documents which outlines the work already carried out to try and bolster Welsh Medium childcare provision in RCT in relation to the matter at hand, namely that of transferring 4 Council-run childcare provisions to external providers.</p> <p>Welsh Language Services encourage you to think about whether there is an opportunity here to commission a specific Welsh Medium provision, in line with any identified community need (such as in Pontypridd, to address any concerns about WM provision/transition after the closure of Pont Siôn Norton), and also to meet our aims and statutory duties under the WESP to ‘create’ rather than just ‘meet’ the demand for WM education, and to increase the number</p>	November 2022	<p>Discuss the possibility of the existing Pontypridd English setting becoming Welsh provision with Mudiad Meithrin and if agreed then proceed to include an option within the EOI for the service to transfer to a Welsh provider should one come forward. Any potential provider would need to consider the TUPE implication of only having 2 fluent Welsh Speakers, but this will also be discussed with Mudiad Meithrin.</p> <p>Further comments by Welsh Language Services 14/11/22– we welcome the further detail regarding the good work already carried out to ensure the availability of more Welsh medium childcare provision in the county borough, and to help meet any increase in demand for Welsh medium provision as a result of actions/ changes. We also welcome the possibility of exploring a Welsh</p>

of 3-year olds entering WM education, which is obviously helped by them attending a WM childcare/pre-school setting.		medium session in Pontypridd, too, and would be happy to discuss any WLIA needed in the future regarding this potential proposal.
Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
Overall, officers were pleased with the content and evidence within the Impact Assessment.	12-01-23	Additional note at the end of section 'Current linguistic profile of the geographical area(s) concerned' required to include Welsh Language figures from 2021 Census
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation


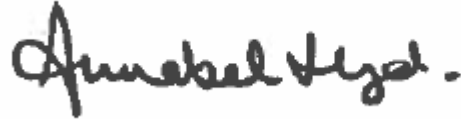
<u>Stage 5 – Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing</u>
How and who will you monitor the impact and effectiveness of the proposal?
<p><i>If agreed, the actions and milestones related to the service change will be monitored through the Community Wellbeing & Resilience Delivery Plan 2023/24 on a quarterly basis in line with the Council's Performance Management Framework. This will include the actions identified in Stage 3 'Strengthening the proposal'.</i></p> <p><i>There will be no direct benefit or impact on any Welsh language groups since the service change relates to English childcare settings only. Parents requiring Welsh provision would not be offered the settings that are impacted by this service change they would be offered alternative provision within their local area.</i></p>

Stage 6 – Summary of Impacts for the Proposal

Provide below a summary of the impact assessment, to include some of the main positive and negative impacts along with an overview of actions taken since the impact assessment to better contribute to more positive impacts. This summary must be included in the Welsh Language Considerations section of the SLT/Cabinet report template. It is not suitable to only write 'please see full report at Appendix x' in the body of the report. The impact assessment must be published alongside the report.

A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been completed and the main findings are as follows – Since this is only a change to the service provider and all staff will TUPE to the new provider, there will be no direct changes to the service being delivered so neutral changes in all area of the impact assessment have been noted.

Stage 7 – Sign Off

Name of Officer completing the WLIA	Mandy Perry	Service Director Name:	Annabel Lloyd
Position	Programme Alignment Manager	I recommend that the proposal: (Highlight decision)	Is implemented with no amendments
			Is implemented taking into account the mitigating actions outlined
			Is rejected due to disproportionate negative impacts on the Welsh language
Signature		Service Director Signature	
Date	10 January 2023	Date	10 January 2023

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23rd JANUARY 2023

COUNCIL FEES AND CHARGES PROPOSALS

2023/24

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES

Author: Barrie Davies (01443) 424026

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out:

- Proposed revisions to Council fees and charges levels for the 2023/24 financial year to be consulted on as part of phase 2 of the 2023/24 budget consultation process (with the proposed revisions to be effective from 1st April 2023 or as soon as is practicable thereafter); and
- Details of fees and charges decisions previously approved and to be included in the 2023/24 proposed Budget Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider proposed revisions to Council fees and charges for the 2023/24 financial year.
- 2.2 Agree for fees and charges proposals (as set out at paragraphs 5.2.1 to 5.2.29) to be consulted on through phase 2 of the Council's 2023/24 Budget Consultation process and reported back to Cabinet for consideration as part of formulating a recommended Budget Strategy for 2023/24.
- 2.3 Note the fees and charges decisions previously approved and to be included in the 2023/24 proposed Budget Strategy (paragraph 5.5 / Table 1).

3. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide Cabinet with details of proposed revisions to fees and charges for the 2023/24 financial year and associated consultation arrangements, to help inform Cabinet's considerations in setting fees and charges levels for the forthcoming financial year (2023/24).

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council provides a wide range of services across the County Borough and the ability to apply a charge is an important funding source to support the cost of maintaining service provision.
- 4.2 As part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements, fees and charges are reviewed regularly and account is taken of funding levels received through the Local Government Settlement; the implications of decisions already approved; Corporate Plan priority areas; feedback received as part of the consultation process; and the level of inflation (i.e. the latest 12 month Consumer Prices Index (CPI) to November 2022 is 10.7%).
- 4.3 Members will note that Phase 1 of the Council's 2023/24 Budget Consultation process set out that an across-the-board increase in line with the latest CPI at the time (i.e. 11.1% as at October 2022) for all fees and charges is not appropriate, with the need for fees and charges to be reviewed individually having regard to service user impact and recognising the pressures on household budgets as a result of the on-going cost of living crisis. 84.3% of respondents to this question agreed with this approach as part of phase 1 of the Council's 2023/24 Budget Consultation process.

5. REVIEW

- 5.1 Services have reviewed fees and charges levels having regard to the information set out in Section 4 with the objective to continue to provide a comprehensive range of quality services at affordable and competitive prices and, in doing so, not pass through to customers / service users the full impact of inflation when setting fees and charges levels for the 2023/24 financial year.
- 5.2 The outcome of review is a proposed 5.0%¹ standard increase to fees and charges, with the Council absorbing the implications of not applying a standard uplift in line with the CPI rate of inflation. In addition, as part of the detailed service by service review, a number of areas are proposed to be subject to specific treatment, as set out below and at Appendix 1.

¹ Proposed 5.0% standard increase – the Council's 2023/24 budget modelling already incorporates a proposed 2% increase to all fees and charges

Car Park Charges

- 5.2.1 Further to the Council reducing car park charges from April 2017, as part of a wider strategy to encourage visitors to town centres, it has maintained charges at the same level since this time (noting that in all of the town centres across the County Borough other than Aberdare and Pontypridd, parking is already free). It is proposed the continuation of this strategy for 2023/24 and for car park charges to be frozen in Aberdare and Pontypridd.

License (Hackney Carriage / Private Hire)

- 5.2.2 Fee and charges levels have been increased for hackney carriage and private hire licenses in line with the Council's annual fees and charges review, with the exception of the current year (2022/23) where license fees were frozen. It is proposed that license fees continue to be frozen for 2023/24 to support the sector in its recovery from the pandemic.

Cinema Entrance Fee

- 5.2.3 Cinema entrance fees have been increased as part of the Council's annual fees and charges review for the past three years (2020/21 to 2022/23). It is proposed that cinema entrance fees are frozen for the forthcoming year to help support the Council's offer, located in the local communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf, remaining competitive with the prices in the commercial sector.

School Meals (Primary and Secondary Schools)

- 5.2.4 Cabinet determined to freeze school meal prices for the previous 2 financial years, 2021/22 and 2022/23, with the primary school meal price being £2.55 and the free school meal value of a secondary school meal being £2.80.
- 5.2.5 It is proposed that the price of a primary school meal and free school meal value of a secondary school meal to both increase by £0.15 to £2.70 and £2.95 respectively, noting that from April 2023 the roll out of universal free school meals will cover learners within nursery, reception and Year 1 and Year 2 groups.
- 5.2.6 In terms of comparing school meal prices across local authority areas in Wales, based on the latest information available, 2022/23 prices range between £2.10 and £2.85 for primary schools and £2.35 and £3.05 for secondary schools.

Leisure for Life – Membership / Pay and Play

- 5.2.7 Previous decisions taken by Cabinet have seen the Council's Leisure for Life membership price frozen since January 2018, this being part of an on-going strategy to provide high quality leisure facilities at affordable prices across the County Borough.
- 5.2.8 From April 2023, it is proposed that a £0.50 increase is applied to the Leisure for Life Membership, taking the adult monthly price (direct debit 12-month commitment) from £37 to £37.50, with a consistent approach to price uplifts applied to other Leisure for Life memberships, for example, the Leisure for Life annual membership increased by

£5 per year (i.e. 10 months * £0.50 per month increase). Comparison with provision in neighbouring local authority areas is not informative due to the differing level of services offered and the differing range of facilities in place.

5.2.9 A breakdown of the proposed changes to the Council's Leisure for Life membership and Pay and Play prices from April 2023 are included as Appendix 2.

Bereavement Services (Burial and Cremation Fees)

5.2.10 It is proposed that burial and cremation fees are increased by 10% from April 2023:

- Cremation Fee – the proposed 2023/24 price of £812.90 compared to the 2022/23 price of £739.00.
- Burial Fee (grave purchase fee and internment fee) – the proposed 2023/24 price of £2,116.40 compared to the 2022/23 price of £1,924.00.

5.2.11 In terms of comparing bereavement fee prices with neighbouring local authorities and private sector providers, 2022/23 cremation fees range from £630.50 to £850.00 and burial fees range from £1,334.00 to £2,130.00.

5.2.12 Members will note that in line with the 8th May 2019 Delegated Decision, a 25% reduction will be applied to all bereavement fees incurred by families of deceased war veterans and service men and women resident in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Members will also note that the Council continues to offer a Direct / Simplicity cremation at a reduced fee, this being in line with the 2022/23 Fees and Charges report approved by Cabinet on [28th February 2022](#).

Rhondda Heritage Park / Lido (Pontypridd) / Dare Valley Country Park (caravan pitch charge)

5.2.13 Admission prices at both Rhondda Heritage Park and Lido (Pontypridd) have been frozen since 2019/20, in line with the Cabinet's annual review of fees and charges levels.

5.2.14 As part of a review of the range of provision at the Rhondda Heritage Park and associated costs, proposed prices from April 2023 are set out at Appendix 3.

5.2.15 In respect of the Lido (Pontypridd), it is proposed that the cost of adult entry admission is £3 from April 2023 compared to the current price of £2, with free entrance continuing for under 16 and a price freeze for paid activities.

5.2.16 With regard to the Dare Valley Country Park (caravan pitch charge), it is proposed that the price from April 2023 is £28 compared to the current price of £21.80.

5.2.17 For completeness, the proposed price changes for Lido (Pontypridd) and Dare Valley County Park have also been incorporated within Appendix 3.

5.2.18 As part of fees and charge considerations for each of the above, a comparison of attractions in neighbouring areas has been undertaken and has confirmed that the proposals would continue to position the Rhondda Heritage Park, Lido (Pontypridd) and Dare Valley Country Park (caravan pitch charge) as some of the lowest and competitively priced attractions.

Day Services – Meal Price

5.2.19 The Day Centre meal price was frozen for the current year (2022/23), in line with the Cabinet’s annual review of fees and charges. It is proposed that the meal price is increased by £0.50 from April 2023, from £4.05 to £4.55.

Home Care Hourly Charge / Day Centre Daily Charge (non-residential care services)

5.2.20 The current charges for home care and day centre services are £17 per hour and £17 per day respectively, the level of charges being held at their current rates since 2014. During this period, the cost of providing such services have increased due to pay and price inflation and more specifically the requirement for care providers to pay a minimum of Real Living Wage to all social care workers, with the aim of the Council being to not, as far as possible, pass additional costs onto service users. Based on this position, it is proposed that from April 2023 the hourly rate charge for homecare will be £20.00 and the daily charge for day centre provision will be £20.00.

5.2.21 In terms of determining the level of charges for services users, all service users who access non-residential care services provided by the Council are subject to a means tested financial assessment. The ‘Means Test’ ensures that after taking into account the contribution from the service user towards the cost of care services the service user will be left with at least 45% more than the basic level of Income Support (or Employment & Support Allowance), or 45% more than the basic level of Pension Credit. This is known as a “Minimum Income Amount” (MIA).

5.2.22 There are approximately 2,150 service users subject to a financial assessment for non-residential care charging, of these 965 (45%) are assessed to make no contribution to services (nil charge). Of the remaining 1,185 service users, 480 are already assessed as paying the maximum charge of £100 per week set by Welsh Government. It is anticipated that of the 705 remaining service users, 520 already pay the maximum based on their assessed income and 185 would see an increase to the contribution that they currently pay of on average £7.50 per week (with increases ranging from £0.75 to £14.30 per week). As noted above, no service user will pay more than the current maximum charge of £100 per week and any increase will take account of their ability to pay based on each individual’s financial circumstances.

Bulky Waste Collection

5.2.23 The Council’s bulky waste collection service offers a collection of up to 3 items for £12.75. It is proposed that from April 2023, the price for the collection of up to 3 items is £17.

5.2.24 In terms of a comparison of fees and charges of neighbouring local authorities, 2022/23 prices range from £16.64 to £25 for collection of up to 3 items.

Residential Parking (annual permit charges)

5.2.25 The residential annual permit charges have been consistently held for a number of years at £10 for first permit, £15 for second permit (if applicable) and £50 for subsequent additional permits (if capacity allows). It is proposed that annual permit charges from April 2023 are revised to £12 for first permit, £17.50 for second permit and £60 for subsequent additional permits.

Registrars (non-statutory)

5.2.26 A review of the range of non-statutory Registrar Services (for example, Marriage and Civil Partnership fee at an approved premises) and associated costs, a price increase of 10% is proposed for such services from April 2023.

Building Regulations

5.2.27 Building Control regulations are minimum standards for design, construction and alterations covering domestic, commercial and public buildings. The Council charges fees to ensure these standards are met and the fees range from just under £100 and can be in excess of £15,000 for large schemes such as new schools. The fees are locally determined and have been held at this level since 1st November 2015.

5.2.28 The schedule of Building Regulation fees is extensive and although there are many local variables impacting on fee levels, a comparison of the most common fee received during 2021/22 with the other 10 South East Wales local authorities (i.e. single storey extensions <10m², erection/extension of a garage <100m² or conversion of a garage to a habitable room) showed that the Rhondda Cynon Taf 2022/23 fee was £288.69 compared to an average across the other 10 local authorities of £346.97. Having regard to this comparison and forecasted inflationary cost increases in 2023/24, it is proposed for Building Regulation fees to be increased by 20% from April 2023.

Non-Statutory Food Export Health Certificates

5.2.29 Further to a review of the costs associated with the provision of non-Statutory Food Export Health Certificates (to enable food to be exported by companies in Rhondda Cynon Taf), the proposed price from April 2023 is £35.75 with the current price being £32.50.

5.3 The estimated overall impact of the proposals set out in paragraphs 5.2.1 to 5.2.29 would generate additional income of £750k in a full year, compared to the Council's initial budget modelling for 2023/24.

5.4 Following on, it is recommended that the proposals set out in paragraphs 5.2.1 to 5.2.29 are consulted on through phase 2 of the Council's 2023/24 Budget Consultation process, with the results reported back to Cabinet for consideration as part of formulating a recommended Budget Strategy for 2023/24.

- 5.5 For Members information, a number of fees and charges decisions have previously been approved and accordingly will be incorporated into the Council's recommended Budget Strategy for 2023/24. These are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 – Summary of decisions already approved

Area of charge	Decision approved
Adult Social Care Charges (non-residential care services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £100 per week in line with the current limit determined by Welsh Government (Cabinet 18th July 2017)
Fixed Penalty Notice (for environmental crimes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set at £100 with effect from 1st April 2018 (Cabinet 25th January 2018)
Houses in Multiple Occupation - Licenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> License fees set for the period 2019/20 to 2023/24 (Cabinet 14th February 2019)
Bereavement fees and charges for war veterans and service men and women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25% reduction to all Council bereavement fees incurred by families of deceased war veterans and service men and women resident in Rhondda Cynon Taf (Delegated Decision 8th May 2019)

- 5.6 Following the phase 2 consultation process and Cabinet determining fees and charges levels for 2023/24, a full list of all fees and charges across all Council services will be published on the Council's website.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Due regard has been given to the Council's public sector equality duties under the Equality Act 2010, namely the Public Sector Equality Duty and Socio-Economic Duty.
- 6.2 An Equality Impact screening assessment has been completed and concluded that the recommendations set out in the report are in line with the above legislation.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no Welsh language implications as a result of the recommendations in this report.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 A comprehensive budget consultation exercise is being undertaken as part of informing the formulation of a recommended Budget Strategy for 2023/24.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 As outlined in section 5 of the report, the proposed revisions to fees and charges levels for 2023/24 would generate increased income of £750K in a full year, this being subject to Cabinet firstly deciding to consult on the proposed revisions and, following consideration of the consultation feedback, determining whether or not to implement the proposed revisions to fees and charges levels for the forthcoming financial year.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

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

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

- 11.1 Fees and charges income is a critical component of the funding arrangements for many services. At a local level, the proposals intend to ensure the continued provision of a comprehensive range of quality services at affordable prices for users to support the Council's work in delivering its Corporate Plan priorities; improving the provision of essential services; and at the same time 'living within its means'.
- 11.2 The proposals also complement the requirements of the Well Being of Future Generations Act in helping to provide Services with adequate resources to continue their work in shaping provision fit for the future and, in doing so, enable positive contributions to be made toward meeting the seven national wellbeing goals.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 This report sets out proposed revisions to Council fees and charges levels for 2023/24 and seeks Cabinet's approval to consult on the proposals as part of phase 2 of the 2023/24 budget consultation process.

Other Information

Relevant Scrutiny Committee – Overview and Scrutiny Committee

PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2023/24

Group	Service Area	Type Of Income	2023/24 Proposed Increase
Chief Executive	Land Charges	Land Charges (excluding those set nationally)	5.00%
Community and Children's Services	Environmental Health (Pollution) and Licensing (where applicable)	Licences (General)	5.00%
		Licenses (Hackney Carriage and Private Hire)	0%
		Houses in Multiple Occupation – Licenses	Price set in line with previous decision
	Food Standards	Course Fees General	5.00%
		Non-Statutory Food Export Health Certificates	10.00%
	Bereavement Services*	Cremation Fees (including Direct / Simplicity cremations)	10.00%
		Burial Fees	10.00%
		All supplementary fees & charges	5.00%
	Registrar (non-statutory)	Booking Fees	10.00%
		Attendances	10.00%
	Leisure Centres and Swimming Pools	Pay & Play Fees	As per Appendix 2
		3G Pitch Hire	5%
		Membership Fees	As per Appendix 2
	Rhondda Heritage Park	<u>Admission Fees - Schools</u>	As per Appendix 3
		Welsh Mining Experience (underground tour)	
		Santa's Grotto	
		<u>Admission Fees - External</u>	
		Welsh Mining Experience (underground tour)	
		Santa's Grotto	
		Miscellaneous Sales / Souvenirs	5.00%
	Lido – Pontypridd	Leisure Sales Income	Adult entry to £3 from £2 (Children under 16 to remain free)
	Park & Dare & Coliseum Theatres	Bars & Catering	5.00%
		Room/Venue Hire	5.00%
Ticket Sales		Internally set based on act / performance	
Cinema (entrance fee)		0.00%	
Community Centres	Rental Income / Hire Charges	5.00%	
	Leisure Sales Income	5.00%	

Group	Service Area	Type Of Income	2023/24 Proposed Increase
Community and Children's Services	Parks & Recreation Grounds	Summer Fees (Sports Clubs)	5%
		Winter Fees (Sports Clubs)	5%
	Dare Valley Country Park	Hire Charges	5% (and caravan pitch hire from £21.80 to £28)
		Rental Income	5.00%
	Day Services	Catering Income	5.00%
		Meals Sales	£4.55 (from £4.05)
		Hire Of Premises	5.00%
		Produce Sales	5.00%
	In-House Residential Services	Board And Lodge Income	5.00%
		Meals Sales	5.00%
	Domiciliary Care (Adults)	Non Residential Care Charges	In line with previous decision: maximum weekly charge payable set by Welsh Government currently £100 (and based on individual financial circumstances) - Homecare hourly rate / Day Centre daily rate both £20 (from £17)
	Nurseries	Day Nursery Fee Income	5.00%
	Telecare	Lifeline Income	5.00%
	Pest Control	Pest Control Service Charges (Domestic / Public Health)	5.00%
		Other Pest Control Service Charges	5.00%
	Libraries	Library Fines	5.00%
		Hire Charges	5.00%
		Photocopy & Printing Charges	5.00%
		All Other Sales	5.00%
	Adult Education	General Course Fees	5.00%
Hire Charges		5.00%	
Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services	Street Cleansing Operations	Fixed Penalty Notice (environmental crimes)	Price set in line with previous decision
	Allotments	Rental Income	5.00%
	Parks Services	Rental Income	5.00%
		Income From Outside Bodies	5.00%
	Commercial Waste	Trade Refuse Charges (Residual)	5.00%
		Trade Refuse Charges (Recycling)	5.00%
	Waste Collection	Bulky Waste Collection Income	£17 (from £12.75)
		Replacement Bin Charges	5.00%
	Parking Services	Season Ticket Parking Fees	0%
		Parking Fees	0%
		Residential Parking Permits	1st permit £12 (from £10), second permit £17.50 (from £15) and subsequent permits £60 (from £50)
	New Roads and Street Works Act (NRSWA)	Licences	5.00%
	Home To School	Sale of Surplus Seats	5.00%
	Traffic Management	Fees	5.00%

Group	Service Area	Type Of Income	2023/24 Proposed Increase	
Education and Inclusion Services	School Meals Income	School Meals Sales	£0.15 per meal increase for primary and secondary school meals	
	Catering Training	Miscellaneous Contributions	5.00%	
	Meals on Wheels	Clients Meals Sales	Subject to a separate report	
	Peripatetic Music Service	Course Fees General		5.00%
		Performances - Ticket Income		5.00%
		Equipment Hire		5.00%

* Bereavement Services – in line with previous decision: 25% reduction to all Council bereavement fees incurred by families of deceased war veterans and service men and women resident in Rhondda Cynon Taf

APPENDIX 2

<u>Leisure Services - Leisure for Life Membeship</u>				
Activity	2022/23 Prices		2023/24 Proposed Prices	
	Adult £	Concession £	Adult £	Concession £
Leisure for Life Annual	370.00	230.00	375.00	235.00
Leisure for Life (monthly direct debit committed for 12 months)	37.00	23.00	37.50	23.50
Leisure for Life (monthly direct debit)	41.40	25.65	41.90	26.15
Leisure for Life (cash payment per month)	48.65	30.00	49.15	30.50
Leisure for Life (Day Pass)	10.65	6.40	11.15	6.90
Leisure for Life (Corporate / per month)	28.50	0.00	29.00	0.00
Leisure for Life (Corporate / Annual)	282.50	0.00	290.00	0.00
<u>Leisure Services - Pay and Play</u>				
Activity	2022/23 Prices		2023/24 Proposed Prices	
	Adult £	Concession £	Adult £	Concession / Child £
<u>Fitness</u>				
Group Fitness Class	6.00	3.60	6.30	3.80
Fitness studio	6.00	3.60	6.30	3.80
Induction	No charge	No charge	No charge	No charge
GP Referral / step scheme	2.05	2.05	2.05	2.05
<u>Swimming</u>				
Swim	3.70	2.25	4.20	2.50
Swim under 5's	N/A	0.00	N/A	1.00
60+ including aqua aerobics	N/A	No charge	N/A	1.00
1 to 1 swimming lessons(1/2 hr)	N/A	22.10	N/A	24.75
30 min Group swimming lesson	7.50	4.65	8.40	5.20
Per 10 week course	75.00	46.50	84.00	52.00
Learn2 Direct Debit	N/A	17.90	N/A	20.00
<u>Racket sports</u>				
Badminton, squash, Table tennis per person	4.40	2.65	4.60	2.80
Racket hire	3.70	N/A	3.90	N/A
<u>Team Games</u>				
Indoor sport activity (5 aside , netball etc)	44.00	26.50	46.00	28.00
Ball Hire	10.00	0.00	10.50	0.00
Bowls Winter	12.55	7.50	13.20	7.90
Bowls Summer	6.35	3.80	6.65	4.00
Health suite/ spa	4.45	2.70	5.00	3.00
Jog and shower	2.40	N/A	3.00	N/A
<u>Childrens activity</u>				
Coached Sports classes per hour	6.00	3.60	6.30	3.80
Softplay session	N/A	3.60	N/A	3.80
Denotes where proposed 2023/24 prices do not follow the proposed standard 5% increase				

APPENDIX 2

<u>Leisure Services - Hire charges</u>				
Activity	2022/23 Prices		2023/24 Proposed Prices	
	Adult £	Concession £	Adult £	Concession / Child £
Social hire				
<u>Conference and meetings</u>				
Small meeting / conference per HR(approx 15)	23.95	N/A	25.15	N/A
Standard conference	41.80	N/A	43.90	N/A
Large conference (function Hall size)	59.70	N/A	62.70	N/A
Very large conferences (main hall size)	83.65	N/A	87.85	N/A
A per hr setup fee outside of all day booking	41.85	N/A	43.95	N/A
<u>Sport Hire prices</u>				
Single court	8.80	N/A	9.25	5.50
Hall Hire up to 6 courts	44.00	N/A	46.00	28.00
Room for sport use (upto 20)	23.95	N/A	25.15	15.10
Small hall size max 50	31.05	N/A	32.60	19.55
		N/A		N/A
<u>Swimming pool hire per hour</u>				
Pool hire	59.70	N/A	62.70	N/A
Small pool hire	35.75	N/A	37.55	N/A
Diving pit / pool	35.75	N/A	37.55	N/A
Lane hire per lane	11.85	N/A	12.45	N/A
Pool party main pool	119.45	N/A	150.00	N/A
Pool party Small pool	59.70	N/A	62.70	N/A
Commercial double pool hire	119.40	N/A	125.40	N/A
Commercial small pool hire	71.55	N/A	75.10	N/A
<u>Bouncy castle parties</u>				
Standard Castle party (2hr)	89.70	N/A	100.00	N/A
Premium castle party/ softplay (2 Hr)	131.40	N/A	150.00	N/A
Football party	26.50	N/A	27.80	N/A
Denotes where proposed 2023/24 prices do not follow the proposed standard 5% increase				

APPENDIX 3

Rhondda Heritage Park / Lido (Pontypridd) / Dare Valley County Park (caravan pitch charge)		
Ticket Category	2022/23 Price £	2023/24 Proposed Price £
Rhondda Heritage Park		
Adult	7.95	9.95
Child	5.85	6.75
Concession	6.35	6.75
Group Mint and Mine	10.00	11.00
Family of 4 (2 adults / 2 children)	20.00	28.40
Black Gold Tours for Schools		
Non-RCT School Child	5.40	6.40
Non-RCT School Teacher Paying	6.00	6.00
RCT School Child	4.84	5.35
RCT School Teacher Paying	4.84	5.35
School Teacher (1-10 children) Free	0.00	0.00
Classic Car Show		
Adult	2.00	3.00
Child	2.00	3.00
Halloween Event		
Adult Grounds Pumpkin Hunt	0.00	2.00
Child Pumpkin Hunt	3.50	4.00
Tour	3.50	4.00
Easter Egg Eggstravaganza		
Adult Grounds Egg Hunt	0.00	2.00
Child Egg Hunt	2.00	3.00
Child/Adult Tour	3.00	5.00
Workshops	40.00	45.00
Santa's Toy Mine		
Adult	11.00	11.50
Child 4-6	11.00	11.50
Child 6+	11.00	11.50
Child 0-18 Months	3.00	4.00
Child 19 Months – 3 Years	11.00	11.50
Santa's School Child	8.50	9.00
Santa Teacher (1-10 children) Free	0.00	0.00
Santa Accompanying Adult	4.50	5.00
National Lido of Wales		
Paid Activities	2.50	2.50
Free Activities	0.00	0.00
Adult Paying	2.00	3.00
Dare Valley Country Park		
Caravan Pitch Fees	21.80	28.00

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23rd January 2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES

COUNCIL FEES AND CHARGES PROPOSALS 2023/24

Background Papers

None

Officer to contact: Barrie Davies

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23RD JANUARY 2023

THE COUNCIL'S 2023/24 REVENUE BUDGET

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES

AUTHOR: Barrie Davies (01443 424026)

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report provides Cabinet with information in respect of the 2023/24 local government settlement and the outcomes of the budget consultation phase 1 exercise, to assist with its deliberations in formulating the revenue budget strategy for the financial year 2023/24, which it will recommend to Council, for approval.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note that the procedures relating to revenue budget construction, the budget consultation process, and reporting to Council, are set out in the "Budget and Policy Framework" within the Council's Constitution.
- 2.2 To note and consider the outcomes of the budget consultation phase 1 process.
- 2.3 Review and consider the draft 2023/24 Revenue Budget Strategy, detailed in the attached Discussion Paper 'Appendix A'.
- 2.4 Consider and determine the level of Council Tax increase for 2023/24 which it would wish to build into the strategy to form the basis upon which a second phase of consultation will take place.
- 2.5 Agree the draft timetable for setting the 2023/24 revenue budget as set out at Appendix A2.

- 2.6 Agree to receive feedback from the second phase of budget consultation in order to consider and determine the final budget strategy for submission to Council.
- 2.7 Agree that the Council continues to support the medium term financial strategy aimed at maximising ongoing efficiency in service delivery, targeted service transformation and other changes that maintain the financial integrity of the Council whilst still aiming as much as possible to protect jobs and key services.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The revenue budget for the financial year ending the 31st March 2024, must be constructed in accordance with the “Budget and Policy Framework” (contained in the Council’s Constitution), which was agreed by Members in May 2002.
- 3.2 Under these arrangements, it is for the Council’s “respective Chief Officers” to report to Cabinet, and for the Cabinet to then recommend a budget to Council, after having conducted an appropriate budget consultation exercise. I have reproduced the relevant sections of the Constitution at Appendix A1, for Members’ information.
- 3.3 A draft timetable for agreeing the 2023/24 revenue budget strategy is attached at Appendix A2.

4.0 THE KEY ELEMENTS OF A BALANCED BUDGET STRATEGY FOR 2023/24

- 4.1 The Council’s Senior Leadership Team have considered budget strategy options throughout the late Summer and Autumn and alongside the significant cost pressures being faced across the Council, and within the context of the current year’s forecasted £21M overspend. We have also been able to plan in light of the provisional All Wales settlement indications which were provided as part of this years local government settlement.
- 4.2 I have reported on the implications of the provisional settlement and on our updated budget requirement to Council on the 15th December 2022 and set this out in detail in the discussion paper attached at Appendix A.
- 4.3 Based on the provisional settlement and alongside our updated base budget requirements reflecting the continuing increased pressures across many of our services, I have also set out a high level budget strategy option which has included a Council Tax increase of 3.50%.

- 4.4 The outcome from the Phase 1 budget consultation process is also now available for Cabinet to consider alongside the proposals.
- 4.5 Clearly, there are many possible budget permutations open to the Council, but Members' overriding ambition will be to construct a balanced budget, that is equitable and fair to all by limiting any impact on our much valued service provision, maximising efficiency across all services and where possible, targeting resources to key service areas.

5.0 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO ECONOMIC DUTY

- 5.1 Due regard has been given to the Council's public sector equality duties under the Equality Act 2010, namely the Public Sector Equality Duty and Socio-Economic Duty.
- 5.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and concluded that the recommendations set out in the report are in line with the above legislation.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The allocation of resources, as set out in the proposed 2023/24 Budget Strategy, is based on supporting the Council's service delivery requirements and associated statutory responsibilities for the forthcoming year. In doing so, the proposed strategy is in line with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The proposed approach to budget consultation for 2023/24 was set out in the Cabinet report dated 17th October 2022. It comprised 2 phases as follows :

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

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

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The financial modelling assumptions and implications are set out in Appendix A of this report.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS or LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 The Council has a legal duty under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to set a balanced budget and also a legal duty under the Local Government Act 2000 for it to be reported to and approved by Full Council. The construction of the draft 2023/24 Revenue Budget Strategy in line with the “Budget and Policy Framework”, as set out in the Council’s Constitution, will support compliance with the above legal requirements.

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

10.1 The draft budget strategy will be a key enabler for the delivery of the Council’s Corporate Plan and in doing so will support wider partnership objectives and the Well-Being of Future Generations Act.

11.0 CONCLUSIONS

11.1 The Senior Leadership Team holds the collective view that the Council should commit itself to setting its 2023/24 revenue spending at a level which balances the desire for fair and equitable service provision, with the need to recognise the impact that excessive tax burdens can have on local households.

11.2 A translation of the Senior Leadership Team’s recommended strategic approach into a high level budget for 2023/24 with a Council Tax increase of 3.50% is attached to this report.

11.3 Given that the financial resources currently available to the Council are finite and that indicative future local government settlements are likely to be challenging, the Senior Leadership Team believes that an ongoing, robust medium-term financial strategy is essential to ensure that our core public services continue to be improved.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

23rd JANUARY 2023

**A DISCUSSION PAPER PREPARED BY THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM IN
RESPONSE TO THE 2023/24 LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT**

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

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 The Constitution sets out the procedure, which must be adhered to when setting the Council's annual revenue budget. It is a specific requirement of the Constitution that the Council's Chief Officers first report to the Cabinet, to advise Members on the issues involved (see extract of the Constitution at Appendix 1). Following due consideration of that report, and after having conducted an appropriate budget consultation exercise, it will then be for the Cabinet to determine a strategy and recommend a budget to Council, for final approval. A timetable for this process is attached at Appendix 2.

1.2 Prior to determining its preferred budget strategy for the financial year ending the 31st March 2024, the Cabinet must consider:

- The Council's own financial position.
- The financial and service implications of the Welsh Government's (WG) 2023/24 local government settlement.
- Our Cwm Taf – Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan 2018 -2023.
- The Council's Corporate Plan 2020 - 2024.
- The level of demand and the statutory basis for delivery of services.
- The results of the General Budget Strategy consultation exercise.
- The critical role of the Council in recovering from the pandemic and supporting and protecting our residents, businesses and communities through the cost of living crisis.

1.3 If Members are to arrive at the best possible outcome for our residents, it will be important that an appropriate weighting is given to each of the key determinants in paragraph 1.2 above, so that relative resourcing and spending priorities can be properly determined.

1.4 Accurate and up-to-date information is readily available in respect of the Council's own financial position, and officers have now analysed the 2023/24 local government settlement from Rhondda Cynon Taf's perspective.

2.0 THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL POSITION

2.1 Members have continued to receive regular updates on the financial position and projections for this Council during 2022/23. A key starting point and important consideration is the annual statement of accounts. The completion of the audit of the Council's accounts has been delayed as a result of a national accounting / regulatory requirement relating to infrastructure assets needing to

be resolved. Welsh Government approved the necessary regulations on the 1st December and the audit process can now be completed. At the time of writing it is anticipated that the audited accounts will be presented to the Council meeting on the 18th January 2023. The level of General Fund Balances which the Council holds, at the 31st March 2022 amounts to £10.292M.

- 2.2 Given the continuing financial pressures the Council is working under, it remains my view, that the Council should hold a minimum of £10M as General Fund Balances, (i.e. its working balance). This level is set given the context of the need for continued strong financial management that is felt to be essential to ensure that the Council maintains financial flexibility and stability going forward.
- 2.3 It is pleasing to note the level of reserves have been replenished to the minimum level following their utilisation to support our residents and businesses in the immediate aftermath of Storm Dennis.
- 2.4 Members will be aware that in addition to General Fund Reserves, the Council also holds a number of earmarked reserves that are kept under continuous review and are assessed each year by Audit Wales. Members will be aware that included in these Reserves is a Medium Term Financial Planning and Service Transformation Reserve that has successfully supported transitional funding as part of the Council's Medium Term Service Planning arrangements. It has achieved this through helping to smooth the delivery of budget savings over a number of years, whilst still allowing an annual balanced budget to be delivered. The starting point for the Medium Term Financial Planning and Service Transformation Reserve as at the 31st March 2022 is £3.645M. As part of our ongoing strategy, we have continued to identify and deliver savings in-year which means we have been able to increase the level of transitional funding available and the latest position is that this reserve has now increased to £6.648M (additional in year savings to date of £3.003M).
- 2.5 Audit Wales continue to emphasise that we must remain disciplined, if we are to maintain our long-term goal of driving forward continuous improvement of key services, though this becomes increasingly harder to achieve following a period of such severe financial pressures. For the current financial year, these pressures amount to over £21M, and it is against this backdrop that the 2023/24 budget requirement is being assessed.
- 2.6 I believe the Audit Wales assessment is an accurate one and it is clear that Members continue to take their fiduciary duty extremely seriously as evidenced by the positive reports received from the regulators and the track record of budgetary control across services. The challenge, therefore, is to construct a prudent, equitable and fair revenue budget for the financial year ending the 31st March 2024. This must involve an approach which publicly demonstrates sound financial stewardship; which does not take unnecessary risks; which maximises income generation; continues to deliver (as far as possible, and where available) year on year efficiency savings and which delivers the services that are needed and we can afford, as well as protecting as many jobs as possible.

3.0 THE 2023/24 LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT

- 3.1 The timing of the Local Government Settlement in Wales for 2023/24 has followed the UK Government Autumn Statement as announced on the 17th November 2022.
- 3.2 On the 14th December 2022, the Minister for Finance and Local Government (Rebecca Evans MS) announced the Provisional 2023/24 Local Government Settlement. The Minister's statement and key data table is attached at Appendix 3.
- 3.3 The "headlines" of the Provisional 2023/24 Settlement are as follows:-
- a. The overall increase in Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) funding for 2023/24 (of unhypothecated funding) at an all Wales level, after adjusting for transfers is 7.9% (+£403M).
 - b. The settlement for Rhondda Cynon Taf, amounts to an increase of 6.6% which is below the average all Wales increase. Settlement figures across Wales range from 6.5% to 9.3%.
 - c. No 'floor' protection has been included for 2023/24.
 - d. The Settlement figures for 2023/24 include a transfer into the settlement in respect of the Coastal Risk Management Programme (not applicable to this Council).
 - e. The Settlement also provides an indicative all Wales settlement level for financial year 2024/25 at 3.1%. This is indicative only and dependent on current estimates of NDR income and on 2024/25 UK budgets.
 - f. Provisional figures and indicative estimates for 2023/24 and 2024/25 are also included for specific grants, at an all Wales level. The Social Care Workforce Grant is set to continue at the current level. This continues to fund our core base budget.
 - g. The Council's General Capital Funding allocation has increased by £2.287M to £13.886M (having reduced by £2.165M for this financial year).

4.0 IMPLICATIONS OF THE 2023/24 PROVISIONAL SETTLEMENT

- 4.1 The provisional settlement indicates that our 2023/24 RSG and NDR funding will total £470.847M.
- 4.2 In anticipation of the 2023/24 local government settlement, the Council's service managers have constructed base budget requirements for next financial year. Those initial calculations provided for:-
- Estimated employee costs, pension costs and National Insurance Contribution levels;
 - Non-pay (i.e. goods and services) inflation, including energy and fuel;
 - Corporate financing requirements and levies; and
 - Full year effects of any additional burdens imposed on the Council and the implications of demand led pressures.

- 4.3 Whilst the Provisional Settlement is at a higher level than the range modelled in the most recent Medium Term Financial Plan having regard to some of the intense funding and inflationary pressures which are being experienced, it does also recognise the challenge which local government will face, as per the following extract from the Minister’s statement.

“While this is a relatively good Settlement, building on improved allocations in recent years, I recognise that the rates of inflation we have experienced over the last few months and the forecasts from the OBR of continuing significant levels of inflation means that local government will still need to make difficult decisions in setting their budgets.”

- 4.4 Members have continued to receive updates on the projections of the Council’s revenue budget position for the period to 2025/26, as part of our Medium Term Service Planning arrangements. The latest of these assessments was considered by Council on the 28th September 2022 which, based on a range of modelled settlement levels, projected a funding gap of £36.5M (at +3.5% settlement - the indicative all Wales level provided alongside the current years Local Government Settlement).
- 4.5 Since the preparation of the MTFP, officers have continued to update and challenge our base budget requirements for next financial year and into the medium term. The net impact of these changes on the Council’s estimated budget gap for 2023/24 are set out at table 1.

Table 1 : Base Budget Updates and Restated Budget Gap 2023/24

	£'000
Budget Gap at MTFP (3.5% Settlement Level)	36,475
Fire Levy (provisional 8.2%)	530
Reassessment of Base Budget Requirements (special school numbers, capital charges, ALN, demand led social care, Insurance)	1,454
Real Living Wage, Pay and Pensions	6,760
Energy	7,000
Revised Budget Gap at 3.5% Settlement	52,219

- 4.6 As referenced at section 3, the provisional settlement provides this Council with an uplift of 6.6%. This compares favourably with the indicative all Wales settlement level which was provided alongside this years Local Government Settlement of 3.5%.
- 4.7 Cabinet on the 7th November 2022 determined the Council Tax Base for 2023/24 at £77,977.84. The impact on the modelled budget gap of our updated tax base can also now be reflected.
- 4.8 The combined effects of the above have resulted in additional resources available to the Council as shown in table 2.

Table 2 : Additional Resources Available at Provisional Settlement

		£'000
Resources at Indicative All Wales Settlement level (+3.5%)	-	15,450
Resources at Provisional Settlement Level (+6.6%)	-	29,406
Additional Resources at Provisional Settlement	-	13,956
Impact of Updated Tax Base		63
Additional Resources Available for 2023/24	-	13,893

- 4.9 The combined effects of the above updates on the budget gap and following receipt of the provisional settlement are now shown in table 3.

Table 3 : Revised Budget Gap 2023/24

		£'000
Budget Gap at MTFP		36,475
Base Budget Updates		15,744
Additional Resources at Provisional Settlement	-	13,893
Revised Budget Gap at Provisional Settlement		38,326

- 4.10 This reflects the position which was presented to Council on the 15th December 2022 and it is against this backdrop that we must consider our budget strategy for 2023/24.

5.0 DEVELOPING AN EQUITABLE, DELIVERABLE AND BALANCED BUDGET FOR 2023/24

- 5.1 Notwithstanding the more positive settlement from WG for 2023/24, it still falls some way short of funding the significant pressures which we face and at a time when our residents, businesses and communities are facing a cost of living crisis. It is against this context that we need to develop a balanced budget for next year. There remain significant pressures upon many of our services together with a limited ability to increase Council Tax income, and a low tax base. Within these parameters, we will therefore need to take appropriate decisions to ensure that next year's budget is equitable for all, does not compromise our financial stability and protects our key services wherever possible.
- 5.2 I touched upon the Council's overall financial position in Section 2 of the report. In my view, it is vital that we continue with the strategy we have adopted to date that takes account of the importance of sound financial management, including the level of General Fund balances and appropriate use of the "Medium Term Financial Planning and Service Transformation Reserve" as transitional funding, whilst targeting any available resources toward our high priority, customer-focused public services.
- 5.3 Every year, there are certain corporate financial provisions that must be "top sliced" locally, before service budgets can be allocated. Next year will be no different. There will be a requirement for:
- a) A provision to meet levies from External Bodies;
 - b) A provision for Capital Charges;

- c) A provision for all other “Miscellaneous Finance” items (Audit Fees, Insurance Costs, Bank Charges, etc.) which are non-specific to any particular Service Group; and
- d) Resources to fund the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

5.4 As part of our updated budget requirement, appropriate sums have been set aside for these corporate financial requirements.

5.5 The Council also continues to monitor the financial implications of service demand post pandemic, alongside ensuring ongoing service continuity at a time of unprecedented cost increases both to the Council and its partners and contractors.

6.0 COUNCIL TAX LEVELS

6.1 This Council has always acted reasonably when setting its Council Tax, balancing the impact upon services and the ability of the public to pay, recognising that those eligible will receive support through the Welsh Government’s Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS). Our MTFP has been modelled based on an increase in Council Tax for 2023/24 of 2.00%.

6.2 Members will be aware that the costs of the CTRS impacts on the net income generated through any increase in Council Tax. A 1% increase in Council Tax will generate an additional income for the Council of £1.211M (at the 2023/24 tax base level) but will also cost £0.256M in additional CTRS requirements. It therefore follows that a 1% increase generates a net additional income of £0.955M, or stated another way, 21% of any Council Tax increase is lost to support the increased costs associated with the Welsh Government’s CTRS.

6.3 It is proposed that the level of Council Tax for next year now be remodelled and set at an increase of 3.50%. This would align with the expectations of the Cabinet in terms of avoiding excessive increases in Council Tax levels and in light of the remaining budget gap which the Council faces and the desire to maintain as many services as possible.

6.4 The additional income which this would generate, as compared to that previously modelled would be £1.433M.

7.0 SCHOOLS BUDGET (ISB)

7.1 Members have always viewed our schools as being a key priority and have ensured that they have been treated favourably in comparison with other council services.

7.2 The Schools Budget (ISB) has increased and been protected from the worst of the impact of austerity, with an increase over the last 10 years of 28%, at a time when other council budgets have increased by 11%. This would equate to an extra £25M having been provided to schools as compared to other council services.

7.3 The budget gap of £38M which the Council faces equates to 7.7% of our budget, excluding authority wide budgets. Schools have previously been advised, for planning purposes, that they should prepare for a difficult period

and a potential 2.75% reduction in funding after having been funded for all pay and non pay pressures. In this regard they were advised to be prepared to use the flexibility of their own reserves to assist them. For context, the aggregate level of school balances increased from £12M to £20M over the course of the last financial year (2021/22).

- 7.4 The strategy now proposed will see schools allocated funding in full to cover costs in respect of pay, inflation, energy cost increases, pupil number changes and additional pressures in respect of ALN. After adjusting the ISB to reflect lower pension and NI costs, this would provide an additional £18.0M of funding to schools.
- 7.5 The reduction of 2.75% already advised to plan for would result in a budget reduction of £5.3M. It is proposed however that an additional £0.5M be set aside as further support with the school based challenges of ALN plus a further £0.5M of general funding be allocated to schools reducing the impact on Schools to £4.3M.
- 7.6 In overall terms, the proposal would mean that the aggregate schools budget would increase by £13.7M, this representing an increase of 7.9% with the level of efficiency also reduced to 2.2%.

8.0 EFFICIENCY

- 8.1 Council services have for many years now delivered against ambitious efficiency targets, making considerable budget reductions without adversely impacting on front line service provision.
- 8.2 As part of the current year's budget strategy, efficiencies of £4.9M were identified and delivered albeit it was noted that the ongoing sustainability of delivering efficiencies at this level would need to be considered.
- 8.3 In light of the emerging financial challenge facing the Council, senior officers were charged with identifying a range of options and opportunities for budget reduction measures. Service managers were engaged across all service areas ensuring that all contributed to closing the likely budget gap which we were going to face.
- 8.4 Over a number of months including challenge sessions with the Senior Leadership Team, options have been identified and assessed against the service level and resident impact to ensure that our vital services were protected and maintained wherever possible. Following this assessment the Senior Leadership Team is able to propose budget reductions of £16.164M. This can be delivered from measures which would not significantly impact on service levels nor service delivery albeit would include operational service reconfiguration which might be apparent to residents and service users.
- 8.5 The proposals can be summarised as follows :

Table 4 : Efficiency and Service Operational Reconfiguration

	£'000
Service Restructurings and Vacancy Management	2,260
Service Redesign / Use of Technology	505

Operational Service Reconfiguration	2,041
Optimisation of Procured and Commissioned Services	2,970
Additional in-year (2022/23) efficiency Requirement	1,500
Use of External Funding / Recharging	2,507
General Efficiency Measures	4,381
Total Efficiency and Service Operational Changes	16,164

8.6 The Senior Leadership Team can provide assurances to Cabinet, that the measures proposed above can be delivered operationally and without a significant detrimental impact on our front line services.

9.0 **SPECIFIC SERVICE / EXPENDITURE CHANGES**

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

9.2 Alongside this budget strategy, the Cabinet have also determined to review a number of services and strategy proposals and these are set out below. It is noted that a number of decisions are yet to be made and they are included here for modelling purposes only at this stage.

a. Waste Services Strategy

Cabinet have previously agreed to initiate a public consultation and engagement exercise on the option for change. The Consultation process ran from the 5th December 2022 to the 9th January 2023. The consultation feedback and decision whether to progress with the proposal is to be considered by cabinet alongside this report, 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. The “no side waste” rule continues for those households with large 240L wheelie bin collections (but 1 bag of side waste, no larger than 70L, is allowed for the standard 120L bins); and
- (iii) Initiate a trial of the use of reusable recycling sacks for the collection of dry mixed recycling, (DMR).

If Cabinet determine to proceed with the proposal, then it would reduce the Council’s budget by £800k (full year).

b. Community Meals

Cabinet have previously agreed to initiate a consultation on a preferred service change proposal namely to reorganise the existing internal service and provide a hot/frozen Community Meal home delivery service with increased service user charges thus reducing the subsidy per meal.

The Consultation process ran from the 5th December 2022 to the 9th January 2023. The consultation feedback and decision whether to progress with the proposal is to be considered by cabinet alongside this report.

If Cabinet determine to proceed with the proposal, as consulted upon, then it would reduce the Council's budget by £427k (full year).

c. Council Run Nursery Provision

To increase the availability of a range of childcare options for families in local communities, a proposal to undertake a market testing exercise to inform revised service delivery arrangements currently provided at four Council run nursery settings has previously been agreed (24th November 2022). The market testing process would assess the capacity and capability of local providers to deliver and would inform next steps and decision-making arrangements.

The aforementioned market testing has confirmed that there are a number of experienced providers who have expressed an interest to provide the service at one or more of the settings and a procurement process is therefore necessary to determine the ongoing provision and providers.

Subject to Cabinet deciding to progress in line with the above, and replacement service providers being secured, of which the market testing has confirmed a high likelihood, then the Council's budget would be reduced by **£322k (full year)**.

d. Council Tax Premium on Long Term Empty Properties and Second Homes

Cabinet have consulted upon and subsequently determined to recommend to Council the introduction of a Council Tax Premium on long term empty properties and second homes within the County Borough. The proposal will support the Council to protect and continue with the comprehensive range of packages available to bring empty properties back into use, through raising extra council tax, estimated to be **£1,500k (full year)**.

Note, this proposal is subject to Council approval (18th January 2023)

e. Capitalisation of Spend

Expenditure has been identified which is currently funded from our revenue budgets which could, in line with accounting rules, be funded from our capital budgets. These expenditure items relate to IT software licence costs, vehicle purchases and our contribution to the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal.

SLT have considered the impact upon our capital programme, in the context of the overall quantum of the programme across 3 years and concluded that a reduction in our core programme can be delivered. Opportunities will be taken to top up any specific areas of demand or particular impact, using the flexibility provided by the increased capital resources made available as part of next year's settlement, in addition to any one off investment funding opportunities going forward. The Council's updated 3 year capital programme 2023/24 to 2025/26 will set out full details.

The proposal would reduce the revenue budget by **£4,000k**.

f. Fees and Charges

It is proposed that all Fees and Charges are subject to a 5.0% standard increase, with the Council absorbing the implications of not applying an uplift in line with the CPI rate of inflation recognising the significant increase in our cost base and subsequent level of subsidy. A number of areas are proposed to be subject to specific treatment, as set out in the Fees and Charges Proposals 2023/24 being considered by Cabinet alongside this report.

These proposals would generate additional income of **£750k**.

- 9.3 The financial implications (including part-year impact) of the above proposals are shown, for modelling purposes in the following table, noting that decisions remain to be made as referenced.

Table 5 : Specific Service / Expenditure Changes

	£'000
Waste Services - Residual Waste Collection	- 600
Community Meals Service	- 320
Council Run Nursery Provision	- 188
Council Tax Premium (Long Term Empty Properties and Second Homes)	- 1,500
Capitalisation	- 4,000
Fees and Charges	- 750
Total Specific Service / Expenditure Changes	- 7,358

Note, part year savings have been assumed where appropriate.

9.4 ENERGY

- 9.5 The latest available increases for our energy costs for next year show a 283% increase for gas and a 147% increase for electricity. The financial implications of these increases are built into the budget requirement as set out above.

- 9.6 It is apparent from latest available forecasts however, that the likely costs for the year after (2024/25) will be lower and that there is the opportunity to utilise one off funding to smooth the one year spike in energy costs. It is clearly important that we continue to monitor movements in forecasts on a regular basis recognising the extreme volatility in the market at the moment and the most recent announcement regarding the Energy Bills Discount Scheme

(EBDS) and the extent of its applicability for non-domestic consumers is being assessed.

9.7 It is proposed therefore that a contribution from reserves of £5.0M is made to smooth the impact for financial year 2023/24.

9.8 The combined impact of the aforementioned budget strategy components are now set out below.

Table 6 : Impact of the Budget Strategy Components

	£'000
Revised Budget Gap at Provisional Settlement	38,326
<u>Budget Strategy Components</u>	
Schools	- 4,256
Council Tax at 3.5%	- 1,433
Total Service Efficiencies and Operational Service Reconfiguration Savings	- 16,164
Total Specific Service / Expenditure Changes	- 7,358
Remaining Budget Gap	9,115
Energy Reserve	- 5,000
Remaining Budget Gap	4,115

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

9.10 As previously referenced the reserve currently stands at £6.648M, having been replenished during this year (2022/23) by £3.003M to quarter 2. Accordingly, to address the remaining budget gap, it is proposed that an allocation of £4.115M is made from this reserve for 2023/24. This would facilitate a balanced budget for 2023/24 and would leave £2.533M in the reserve (subject to the year-end assessment of reserves). I am confident that processes are now sufficiently well embedded to ensure that savings are achieved in-year and that this reserve can continue to be replenished.

	£'000
Remaining Budget Gap	4,115
Use of Transition Funding	- 4,115
Remaining Budget Gap 2023/24	-

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

10.0 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLANNING

- 10.1 Whilst the focus for this report is necessarily on 2023/24, the pressures on our services means that our Medium Term Financial and Service Planning arrangements remain key to ensuring that financial stability is maintained as the cornerstone of our overall financial health as a Council.
- 10.2 The provision by Welsh Government of an all Wales multi-year settlement with indications of prospects for 2024/25 is helpful for our medium term financial planning arrangements, notwithstanding the lower levels of indicative future year settlements will again present us with a significant challenge. In this regard it is essential that we retain our focus across the medium term planning horizon and seek to ensure that we continue to manage our cost base effectively alongside future prospects for settlement levels.
- 10.3 The delivery of efficiency savings early and as part of our medium term planning has positioned us extremely well in our ability to respond to funding challenges and uncertainties and continues to contribute to the delivery of a lean, efficient and effective organisation.
- 10.4 Acting early, decisively and proactively has doubtlessly positioned us well in responding to the financial challenge which we faced for 2023/24 and it is essential that we retain this focus and approach over the coming period. Unfortunately the outlook for local government finance and services continues to be extremely challenging but we remain well placed to respond and to ensure that we protect our valued public services upon which our residents, businesses and communities rely.

11.0 SERVICE PRIORITIES

- 11.1 Even after a period of significantly reduced resources and hence financial pressure on all services, this Council remains committed as far as it possibly can to continue to deliver its key services, stronger communities and social justice. The Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024 sets out that our key purpose is to provide strong community leadership and create the environment for people and businesses to be independent, healthy and prosperous.
- 11.2 The Senior Leadership Team have had due regard to the plan in formulating the proposals set out in this report.
- 11.3 In addition to our revenue base budget requirements, opportunities also continue to be taken to deliver investment in key strategic areas through one off funding made available via a risk based review of earmarked reserves and through identification of in-year savings opportunities. The Council has already invested over £146M (over and above the normal Capital Programme) in areas supporting key Corporate Plan priorities since October 2015, the latest investment (£2.725M) being agreed by Council in September 2022.
- 11.4 A report setting out the updated capital programme for 2023/24 to 2025/26 will be reported for Members consideration shortly. As was noted at Section 3, the Council's General Capital Funding allocation has increased by £2.287M to £13.886M (having reduced by £2.165M for this financial year).

12.0 2023/24 SERVICE GROUP BUDGETS

- 12.1 The Council adopts a comprehensive budget challenge process involving finance officers and senior managers from each Service area, with a subsequent detailed review and assessment being conducted by the Senior Leadership Team, to ensure consistency and fairness across all service areas.
- 12.2 The 2022/23 revenue budget and the regular performance monitoring reports are available to the Cabinet, to act as a benchmark to evaluate service delivery options, priorities and savings proposals. It is, of course, important to note that the current year's figures are for information purposes only and are not meant to represent a base service requirement, or target. Indeed, budget provision for next year could be more, or less, than the 2022/23 levels, depending upon Members' decisions and spending priorities, and following the impact of the 2023/24 local government settlement.
- 12.3 All of our services continue to complete and have available self assessment and delivery plans. Funding will be a key consideration for these plans and the Senior Leadership Team's budget proposals are intended to underpin these actions. This will allow the budget to be built "bottom up", on the basis of properly identified service need, within the framework provided by the Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan and our own Corporate Plan.
- 12.4 Members will, of course, be keen to demonstrate that the Council is properly discharging all its statutory obligations, but with funding at a premium, will also wish to ensure that our services are being delivered in the most economic, efficient and effective manner. The basic principle which should, therefore, underpin the construction of the 2023/24 budget, is that Members will look to target adequate funding towards the delivery of our key services whilst, at the same time, ensuring that the resultant Council Tax levied next year is reasonable and can be justified to our residents. Attached at Appendix 4 is an outline budget proposal, including efficiency and service funding requirements.

13.0 THE 2023/24 GENERAL BUDGET STRATEGY CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 13.1 As in previous years, the Council has been keen to consult with the public and other interested stakeholders on its general budget strategy and how services are delivered.
- 13.2 The proposed approach to budget consultation for 2023/24 is set out in the Cabinet report dated 17th October 2022. It comprises 2 phases as follows:
- Phase 1** - provided residents and stakeholders with the opportunity to feedback their views on some of the key strategic building blocks used to construct the Council's budget.
- Phase 2** - once Cabinet have agreed a draft budget strategy, and in light of the provisional local government settlement, then this draft strategy will itself be consulted upon as part of Phase 2.
- 13.3 The Phase 1 Consultation report has been available to support the preparation of these proposals and is attached at Appendix 5.
- 13.4 The general budget consultation also incorporated the requirements to consult on discretions available locally for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (which

has been used to inform the Council's decision on its scheme for 2023/24 as considered by Council on the 18th January 2023).

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

14.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 14.1 On the 14th December 2022, the Minister for Finance and Local Government (Rebecca Evans MS) announced the Provisional 2023/24 Local Government Settlement which showed this Council's increase in resources was set at 6.6%.
- 14.2 Whilst the Council's overall financial position remains sound, its level of General Fund Balances are not excessive. The Council must, therefore, retain its focus on maintaining the minimum level of General Fund Balances of £10M, in order to mitigate any risk of future budget instability. Alongside this, there is the opportunity to pragmatically use the Medium Term Financial Planning and Service Transformation Reserve as transitional funding without compromising the Council's financial stability, or reducing our General Fund Balances. As detailed in the report, the use of such transitional funding would produce a balanced budget for 2023/24, supplemented by the pragmatic use of reserves to offset the energy increases.
- 14.3 This Council has continued to deliver year on year robust and balanced budgets alongside an investment programme supporting key priorities. The challenge remains however, for positive and proactive management from the Senior Leadership Team and clear direction from Cabinet to produce a financially sustainable budget into the medium term in what continues to be an extremely challenging and uncertain financial climate.

BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK PROCEDURE RULES

1. The Framework for Executive Decisions

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

2. Process for Developing the Framework

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2023/24 BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING TIMETABLE

26th September 2022

Cabinet – Consider the Council's updated Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2025/26

28th September 2022

Council – Consider the Council's updated Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2025/26

17th October 2022

Cabinet – Consider the approach to Budget Consultation for 2023/24

23rd November to 21st December 2022

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

14th December 2022

Provisional Local Government Settlement - Receipt of provisional settlement figures further to WG Budget on the 13th December

15th December 2022

Special Council Meeting

– Report on the Implications of the Provisional Settlement

18th January 2023

Council Meeting

– Consider the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2023/24

23rd January 2023

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

24th January 2023 to 6th February 2023

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

27th February 2023

Cabinet Meeting – To consider the feedback from the Phase 2 Consultation and to agree the Cabinet's final revenue budget strategy for recommending to Council (plus the Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2025/26)

March 2023

Final Local Government Settlement – Receipt of final settlement figures

8th March 2023

Council Meeting – Cabinet to submit its 2023/24 Budget Strategy and Council Tax levels to Council

Council Decision :

- Approve the 2023/24 Revenue Budget
- Approve the 2023/24 Council Tax (including necessary formal Council Tax Resolution)
- Approve the 2023/24 to 2025/26 Capital Programme



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE Provisional Local Government Settlement 2023-24
DATE 14 December 2022
BY Rebecca Evans MS, Minister for Finance and Local Government

Today, I am publishing details of the core funding allocations for local authorities for the forthcoming financial year through the Provisional Local Government Revenue and Capital Settlements for 2023-24 (the Settlement), along with the Wales-level indicative core funding allocation for 2024-25.

Adjusting for transfers, the core revenue funding for local government in 2023-24 will increase by 7.9% on a like-for-like basis compared to the current year. No authority will receive less than a 6.5% increase. In 2023-24, local authorities will receive £5.5bn from the Welsh Government in Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and non-domestic rates (NDR) to spend on delivering key services.

In addition to this, I am publishing information on revenue and capital grants planned for the following two years. For 2023-24, these amount to over £1.3bn for revenue and over £925m for capital. We are providing these indicative grant values now so local authorities are able to plan their budgets efficiently. This information will be further updated in the final settlement.

The indicative Wales-level core revenue funding allocation for 2024-25 is £5.69bn – equating to an uplift of £169m (3.1%). This figure is indicative and dependent on both our current estimates of NDR income and any 2024-25 UK budgets.

As in recent years, this Government's priorities continue to be health and local government services. In making decisions about the level of funding for local government I have responded to the need to support key front-line services. In particular I have included funding to enable authorities to continue to meet the additional costs of introducing the Real Living Wage for care workers and to support pressures in education. I have again taken the decision to provide all the available funding up front and not hold back funding for in-year recognition of the 2023/24 teachers' pay deal. Authorities' budget planning must therefore accommodate these costs.

I know local government has been facing significant pressures and has sought to recognise the impact of inflation on the living standards of those who work in local government as well as the broader community. I hope that this increased Settlement enables local authorities to

continue to deliver the services communities need as well as supporting national and local ambitions for the future.

This Settlement provides local authorities with a stable platform on which to plan their budgets for the coming financial year and beyond. We have worked closely with local government, and we appreciate the pressures local government is facing. I will continue to engage closely with local government through the WLGA.

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

In line with our focus on countering the effects of poverty, we remain committed to protecting vulnerable and low-income households from any reduction in support under the Council Tax Reduction Schemes, despite the shortfall in the funding transferred by the UK Government following its abolition of council tax benefit. We will continue to maintain full entitlements under our Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for 2023-24 and are again providing £244m for CTRS in the Settlement in recognition of this.

As announced on 12 December, I am providing a package of non-domestic rates support worth more than £460m over the next two financial years. I am maintaining the approach taken in previous years and freezing the non-domestic rates multiplier for 2023-24. This ensures there will again be no inflationary increase in the amount of rates businesses and other ratepayers are paying.

I am also introducing a £113m, fully funded, transitional relief for all ratepayers whose bills increase by more than £300 following the UK-wide revaluation exercise, which takes effect on 1 April 2023.

Finally, the NDR support package also provides over £140m of non-domestic rates relief for retail, leisure, and hospitality businesses in Wales. Eligible ratepayers will receive 75% non-domestic rates relief for the duration of 2023-24, capped at £110,000 per business across Wales. Our approach means that businesses in Wales will receive comparable support to that provided in other parts of the UK.

I set out the position on capital funding for the Welsh Government as part of my budget statement on Tuesday. The settlement we received from the UK Government was disappointing and is not sufficient to meet our ambitions to invest in Wales' future, with our overall capital budget 8.1% lower in real terms than the current year.

Following a review of our capital budgets, general capital funding for local government for 2023-24 has been confirmed at £180m and will remain at £180m for 2024-25. Even as we meet the challenges posed by inflation, we must not lose sight of the need to maintain our focus on responding to the climate and nature emergency and contributing to the Net Zero Wales plan we have developed together. Separately I am providing £20 million capital in each year to enable authorities to respond to our joint priority of decarbonisation.

Attached to this statement is a summary table setting out the Settlement allocations (Aggregate External Finance (AEF)) by authority. The allocations are derived using the formula agreed with local government. As a result of the formula and related data, the table shows the range of the funding allocations, from a 6.5% increase over the 2022-23 settlement to a 9.3% increase. Given the significant increases, I am not proposing to include a floor this year and have allocated all the available funding in this Settlement.

Further details will be sent to all local authorities and published on the Welsh Government's website: <https://gov.wales/local-government-revenue-and-capital-settlement-2023-2024>

While this is a relatively good Settlement, building on improved allocations in recent years, I recognise that the rates of inflation we have experienced over the last few months and the forecasts from the OBR of continuing significant levels of inflation means that local government will still need to make difficult decisions in setting their budgets. It is important they engage meaningfully with their local communities as they consider priorities for the forthcoming year.

The setting of budgets, and in turn council tax, is the responsibility of each local authority. Authorities will need to take account of the full range of funding sources available to them, as well as the pressures they face, in setting their budgets for the coming year.

This announcement commences the formal seven-week consultation on the Settlement. This will end on 2 February 2023.

Summary Table

2023-24 provisional Settlement – comparison of 2022-23 AEF (adjusted for transfers) and 2023-24 provisional AEF, and distribution of the 2022-23 Council Tax Reduction Schemes funding (distributed within AEF) (£000s)

	<i>£000s</i>				
Unitary authority	Adjusted 2022-23 final AEF*	2023-24 provisional AEF	Change (£000)	Change (%)	Rank
Isle of Anglesey	114,490	123,555	9,064	7.9%	12
Gwynedd	213,017	227,843	14,826	7.0%	19
Conwy	184,915	198,413	13,498	7.3%	16
Denbighshire	173,596	187,871	14,275	8.2%	10
Flintshire	232,336	251,747	19,410	8.4%	8
Wrexham	207,279	224,621	17,342	8.4%	7
Powys	210,090	228,388	18,298	8.7%	5
Ceredigion	119,238	129,050	9,812	8.2%	9
Pembrokeshire	196,776	212,415	15,639	7.9%	11
Carmarthenshire	311,585	338,017	26,432	8.5%	6
Swansea	388,409	417,775	29,366	7.6%	14
Neath Port Talbot	258,174	276,397	18,223	7.1%	17
Bridgend	232,109	249,895	17,786	7.7%	13
The Vale Of Glamorgan	185,931	202,535	16,604	8.9%	3
Rhondda Cynon Taf	441,596	470,847	29,251	6.6%	21
Merthyr Tydfil	110,704	118,497	7,793	7.0%	18
Caerphilly	317,789	339,610	21,821	6.9%	20
Blaenau Gwent	131,057	139,597	8,540	6.5%	22
Torfaen	160,218	172,223	12,005	7.5%	15
Monmouthshire	112,020	122,490	10,470	9.3%	1
Newport	265,502	289,211	23,709	8.9%	4
Cardiff	543,810	592,891	49,081	9.0%	2
Total Unitary Authorities	5,110,643	5,513,888	403,245	7.9%	

Note: Total may not sum correctly due to rounding

1. 2023-24 AEF adjusted transfers of £3.040m (at 2022-23 prices) into and out of the Settlement and for the latest 2023-24 tax base.

AVAILABLE REVENUE RESOURCES 2023/24 AND PROPOSED USAGE

£'000

Total resources available in 2023/24	610,511
LESS: Total resources available in 2022/23	566,792
<u>INCREASE</u> in resources available in 2023/24	43,719

£'000

Allocation of Resources

Delegated Schools Budget	12,231
Education & Inclusion Services	2,016
Community & Children's Services	20,281
Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services	5,907
Chief Executive	2,153
Authority Wide Requirements	1,131
	43,719

PROPOSED REVENUE BUDGET 2023/24

Education & Inclusion Services

Delegated Schools Budgets

	£'000
Net Revenue Budget 2022/23	174,745
Base Adjust	(1,494)
Increase	13,725
Proposed Net Revenue Budget 2023/24	186,976

Non Delegated Budgets

	£'000
Net Revenue Budget 2022/23	33,674
Base and Inflationary Pressures	4,592
Efficiency and Service Operational Reconfiguration	(1,969)
Specific Service / Expenditure Changes	(607)
Proposed Net Revenue Budget 2023/24	35,690

Total Net Revenue Budget 2023/24	222,666
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Community & Children's Services

	£'000
Net Revenue Budget 2022/23	182,177
Base and Inflationary Pressures	29,758
Efficiency and Service Operational Reconfiguration	(8,798)
Specific Service / Expenditure Changes	(679)
Proposed Net Revenue Budget 2023/24	202,458

Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services

	£'000
Net Revenue Budget 2022/23	65,269
Base and Inflationary Pressures	9,999
Efficiency and Service Operational Reconfiguration	(2,875)
Specific Service / Expenditure Changes	(1,217)
Proposed Net Revenue Budget 2023/24	71,176

Chief Executive

	£'000
Net Revenue Budget 2022/23	35,822
Base and Inflationary Pressures	5,680
Efficiency and Service Operational Reconfiguration	-2,522
Specific Service / Expenditure Changes	-1,005
Proposed Net Revenue Budget 2023/24	37,975

Authority Wide

	£'000
Net Revenue Budget 2022/23	75,105
Increase	1,131
Proposed Net Revenue Budget 2023/24	76,236

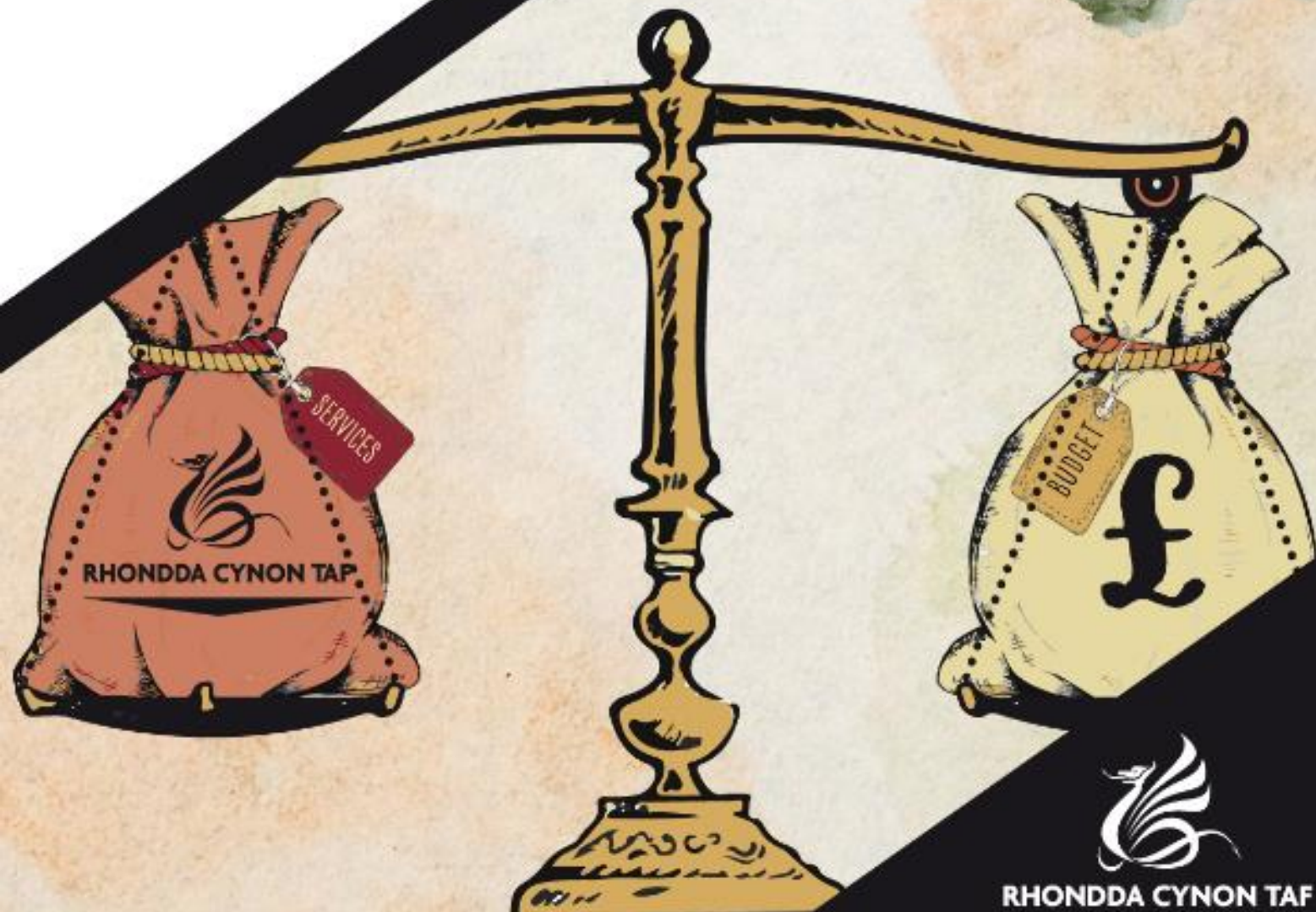
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Let's talk
RCT

2023/24 BUDGET (PHASE 1)

Budget Consultation

Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC

January 2023



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This section provides a summary of the main findings from the Phase 1 Budget Consultation 2023/24.
- The consultation was conducted in-house and ran from the 23rd November to 21st December 2022.
- The following methods were used to consult with stakeholders: online survey and Quick Poll via the [Let's Talk Budget website](#); a series of outdoor events with budget and climate themed questions being asked; online presentations and discussions with community and school groups; social media posts; email invitations to take part. These are explained in Section 3, Methodology.
- 515 full survey responses were received, with a further 525 Quick Poll responses.
- 72.6% of respondents agreed that the Council should provide sufficient resources to fully cover increased pay and non-pay costs in our schools.
- 81.6% of respondents agreed that the Council should continue to prioritise social services as a key area for additional investment.
- 84.3% of respondents agreed that individual reviews of fees and charges is a reasonable approach for the Council to take. Comments included the key themes of affordability, support for individual reviews of different fees and charges and views on different chargeable service areas. In general, commenters were in favour of protecting essential services and applying increases to non-essential services.
- With respect to perceived importance of services, respondents mentioned waste and recycling collection, many of which referred to the ongoing consultation regarding potential reduction in waste collections. Social care services and education also had a great deal of support in the comments, alongside libraries, leisure services and the importance of maintaining face-to-face services alongside digital improvements and online services.
- 68.3% of respondents answered that protecting services at current levels through a reasonable increase in Council Tax was preferable. 31.7% answered that they think the Council should cut services in order to minimise Council Tax increases.
- Respondents were also asked to choose their preferred level of Council Tax increase for next year, with three options provided. 55% of respondents selected the lowest option of 0% - 3%, with 37.9% selecting the second band of between 3% and 5%. 7.2% of respondents selected the highest level of 5%+.

- When asked for any general comments about Council Tax, the majority of commenters voiced concern that any increase/ large increases in Council Tax would add pressure to vulnerable and working families in RCT during the cost-of-living crisis, although many commenters also agreed that preserving service levels is very important.
- The majority of respondents (91.7%) thought that the approach to efficiencies outlined was a good strategy.
- 89.5% of respondents said that we should continue to expect our managers to deliver more efficient services in the future.
- 75.1% of respondents agreed that the Council should continue with the Reserves Strategy that was outlined.
- A Quick Poll asked people whether they believe the Council should a) reduce service levels to close any budget gap and keep any increase in Council Tax to a minimum or b) protect as many Council services as possible at their current level by applying a reasonable increase in Council Tax to contribute to closing the budget gap. Of the 525 responses received, a majority of 76.6% (402) answered “Protect as many Council services as possible at their current level by applying a reasonable increase in Council Tax to contribute to closing the budget gap.”
- Over 1300 people took part in the various engagement activities carried out during the consultation Phase 1.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the Phase 1 Budget Consultation 2023/24.
- 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 from the consultation activities carried out on the Let's Talk Budget website.
- 1.5 Sections 5 presents the results from a number of community conversations that took place across Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 1.6 Section 6 outlines the engagement that took place with young people.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council undertakes a comprehensive approach to its annual budget consultation, involving a large number of residents and key stakeholders.
- 2.2 The widespread approach we use and the range of views we capture provides senior managers and Cabinet Members with the necessary information they need to set the budget for the year ahead. In addition, we have found that the vast amount of information we collect can also be valuable for service managers to use for their service planning and development.
- 2.3 The Council's [Medium Term Financial Plan](#) has been used as a basis of planning our 2023/24 budget strategy consultation processes.
- 2.4 This report presents the findings of phase 1 of the budget consultation, where views were sought on:
- level of Council Tax increase
 - the resources allocated to our schools
 - the Social Care Budget
 - fees and charges levels
 - protection and prioritisation of services for additional resources
 - delivering more efficient services
 - Council reserves; and
 - Council Tax Reduction Scheme
- 2.5 Phase 1 of the Council's budget consultation ran from the 23rd November to 21st December 2022.
- 2.6 Phase 2 of the consultation will commence in January 2023 and will seek to obtain views on the proposed Budget Strategy for 2023/24.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The 2023/24 budget consultation has 2 phases. This report presents the results of the first phase. Phase 1 of the Council's budget consultation ran from the 23rd November to 21st December 2022 and aimed to collect views on priorities, council tax levels and efficiency savings. This report will be presented to Cabinet and Officers to consider the feedback received whilst developing a draft Budget Strategy for 2023/24. Phase 2 will take place in the New Year and will engage with residents on this draft strategy.
- 3.2 The consultation approach used the [Let's Talk](#) online engagement platform, which provides a user friendly and interactive form of engagement. The "[Let's Talk Budget](#)" project provided key information, key dates, documents and graphics to outline the background to the Council's budget, in addition to a number of engagement tools to allow feedback, which included online polls and a survey.
- 3.3 Social media was used to communicate the key messages to residents and service users and encourage engagement and feedback regarding the Council's budget and investment areas.
- 3.4 An email was sent to a range of key stakeholders to promote the consultation.
- 3.5 A number of outdoor face-to-face engagement events were held across the county borough. The Council's recycling trailer was used and Officers were on hand to outline the budget approach, answer questions and collect views. The following engagement events took place during the consultation:

Trailer Event 1:	Pontypridd Mill Street	30/11/2022
Trailer Event 2:	Tonypandy Town Centre	2/12/2022
Trailer Event 3:	Aberdare Town Centre	7/12/2022

- 3.6 We continued to consider those having reduced or no access to the Internet and those who prefer to engage through traditional methods.
- A telephone Consultation option is in place for all Council consultations, through the Council's Contact Centre. The option allows people to discuss their views or as a minimum to request consultation materials.
 - Individual call backs on request.
 - Consultation freepost address for postal responses.
- 3.7 We also produced an "Easy Read" document of the budget documents, online and available on request (in both Welsh and English).

- 3.8 A discussion and presentation was held with the Older Persons Advisory Group (OPAG).
- 3.9 The consultation was also promoted to other groups, including the Disability Forum and Community Hubs.
- 3.10 We engaged with young people in St. John Baptist Church in Wales High School. The session was attended by members of the Consultation Team along with a finance officer. During the session a presentation was shared with the young people with discussion prompts and questions from the full budget consultation.
- 3.11 Budget content was also created and shared on the YEPS Instagram account through polls and stories. The Council's Budget Content was also shared by YEPS' Facebook account.
- 3.12 The Council's Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee and School Budget Forum were consulted (the minutes of which have not been included in this report).
- 3.13 In addition to the above, all members have had the opportunity over recent months at Cabinet and through Full Council to engage in the ongoing work on the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements.
- 3.14 Over 1,300 people were engaged in the phase 1 budget consultation.

4 Let's Talk Budget

- 4.1 The following section outlines the results from the main consultation activities, including those carried out on the Let's Talk Budget website.
- 4.2 There were two ways for page visitors to engage with the consultation. Firstly, the full survey, with questions written and provided by the Finance department of RCT. Secondly, a stand-alone Quick Poll question about Council Tax increases to capture additional responses from site visitors unable or unwilling to complete the full survey.

Survey Results

- 4.3 A total of 515 completed surveys were received, including the results from a small number of paper copies which were completed and handed in to RCT staff. For the purposes of this report, any blank responses to individual questions have been discounted. Therefore, all percentages quoted are a percentage of the total responses for that individual question. Where any figures do not add up to 100%, this is due to rounding and does not signify an error in counting.

Schools Budget

- 4.4 72.6% of respondents agreed that the Council should provide sufficient resources to fully cover increased pay and non-pay costs in our schools.

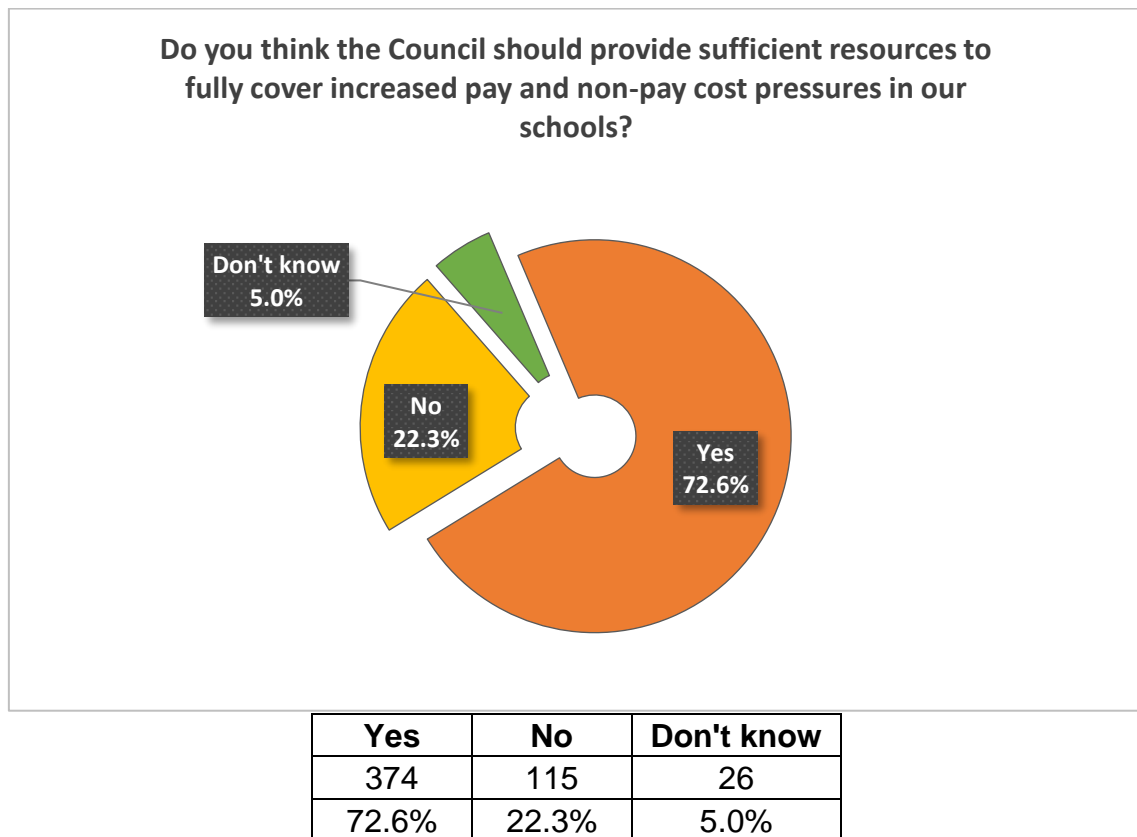


Figure 1 - Schools Budget Increase

The members of the Older Persons Advisory Group (OPAG) agreed, commenting that the Council should continue to provide sufficient resources to fully cover increased pay and non-pay cost pressures in schools as schools are vital for now and the future.

Social Care budget

4.5 81.6% of respondents agreed that the Council should continue to prioritise social services as a key area for additional investment.

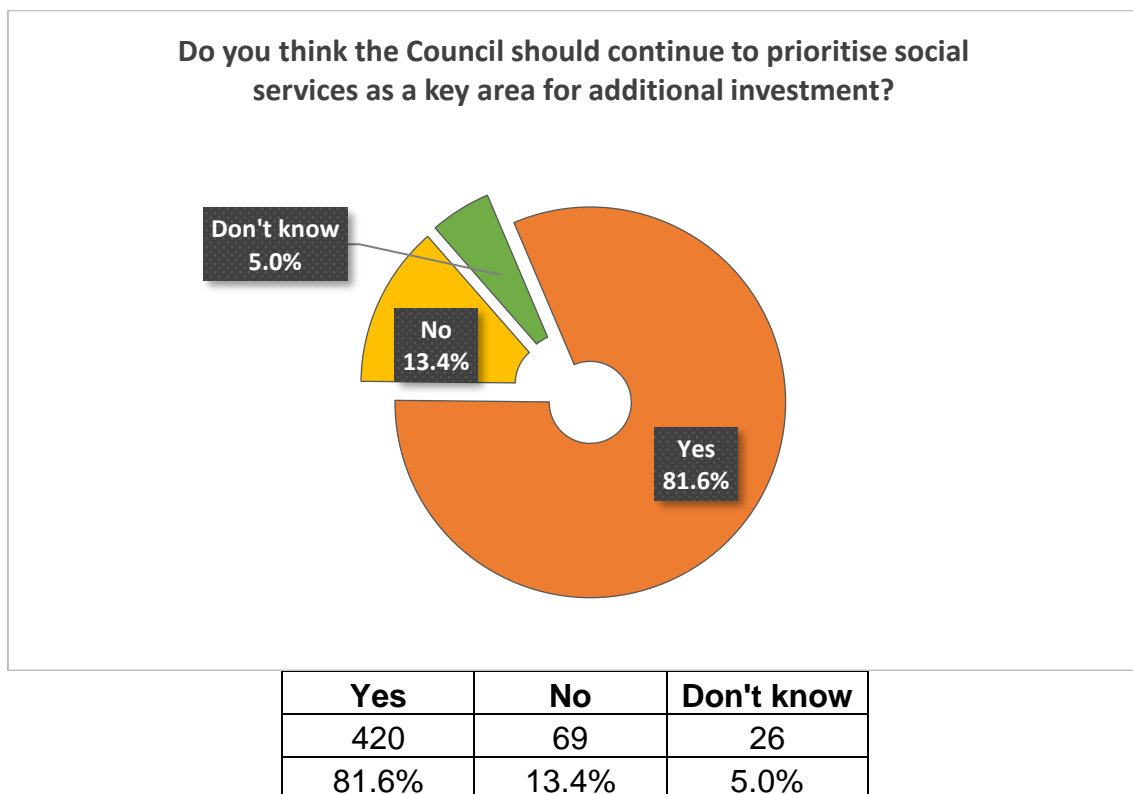
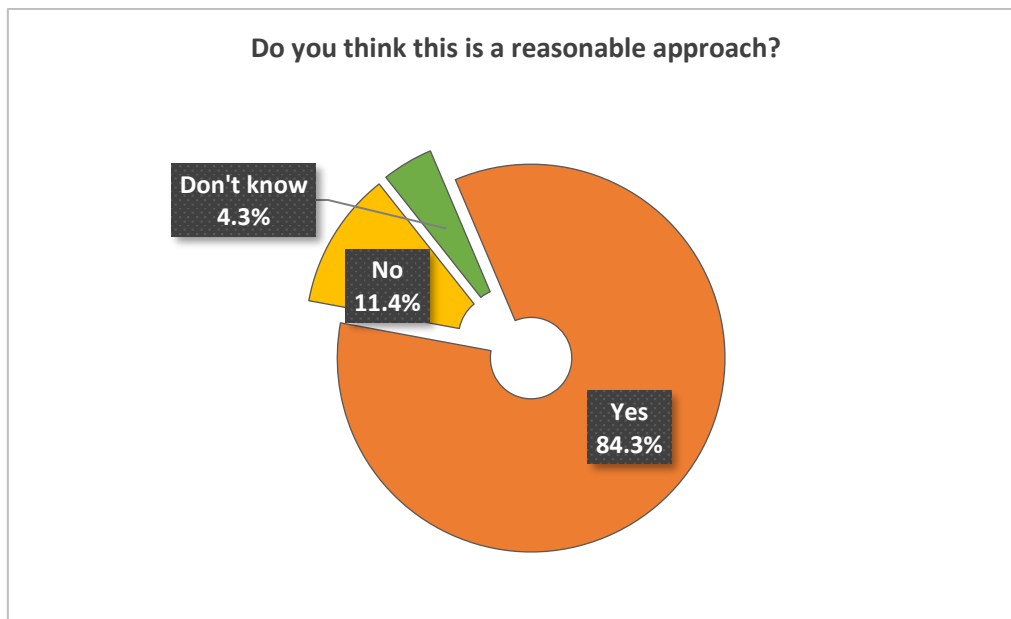


Figure 2 - Prioritisation of Social Services for additional investment

The members of OPAG advised that the Council should continue to prioritise social services as a key area for additional investment; however, queries were raised surrounding the issues with recruitment and retaining social workers and the Councils initiative to improve this going forward.

Fees and Charges

4.6 84.3% of respondents agreed that individual reviews of fees and charges is a reasonable approach for the Council to take.



Yes	No	Don't know
435	59	22
84.3%	11.4%	4.3%

Figure 3 – Fees and Charges

4.7 149 comments were received in relation to Fees and Charges, with the key themes being affordability, support for individual reviews of different fees and charges and views on different chargeable service areas. In general, commenters were in favour of protecting essential services and applying increases to non-essential services, but there is no consensus on which services are essential or not.

4.8 A selection of comments is presented here. The full text of all comments received in the consultation are available for Cabinet and Officers to view.

No fees should increase by more than the increase % of Wages

Most definitely should be reviewed individually, or you will price facilities out of people reach

If you raise the prices too much usage will drop and you will not raise extra money.

Fees for things like parking, which for some are essential activities (Shopping working) need careful consideration. More discretionary activities should be considered separately especially where there is private sector provision for similar things.

Is there room for some charges to be waived for those on very low income? Pest Control for example.

Fees for activities that keep children active such as swimming should be at a reduced cost

No car parking charges, if need to charge reduce or extend the time. We need more footfall into our towns, people don't come due to car park charges

It should be considered whether raising some fees will make services less appealing and potentially impact other (statutory) services. For example - charging more for collecting large items for waste disposal could result in more fly-tipping.

It's far more acceptable to increase fees and create more revenue for voluntary and optional activities rather than essentials.

Members of OPAG agreed that the fees and charges need to be reviewed individually; in terms of the leisure services (Swimming Pools) the group requested that those remain the same as they play a vital role within the group for social and exercise purposes.

- 4.9 The relative frequencies of themes are illustrated in the graphic, with a selection of comments presented below:



Figure 4 – Comments on Fees and Charges

- 4.11 *Social care is extremely important to me and should be top priority along with health services. I am a firm believer that if you haven't got good health and well-being, you have nothing as this can impact on every aspect of your life.*

Telephone contact with a human being as not everyone is able to or has access to use a computer for online contact

Online services, improved website functionality in regards to paying for things.

Keeping toilets open for disabled people. Keeping pavements clean and catching the perpetrators using cameras.

All statutory services, education, community, recycling (youth services if we had any!) - NOT important is the funding of an environmentally damaging and unnecessary road.

Free school meal payments to vulnerable households and regular refuse collection.

I think that more money should be put into providing good quality services

The online options are useful and should be maintained. The current refuse/recycling collections work well and are important

A member of OPAG advised that they have all settled well with the use of technology during the pandemic. However, some advised of the difficulties of accessing and using technology during the pandemic and noted the need to provide alternatives to digital in order to enable everyone to get involved. A member advised of a need to introduce free WIFI across all towncentres as this will increase the use of technology.

- 4.12 Respondents were asked "Do you think the Council should consider changing the level of services for any of these and if so how?".

A selection of comments is presented here. The full text of all comments received in the consultation are available for Cabinet and Officers to view.

Happy to consider services changes as long as they have a strong rationale and still allows Council to de-carbonise and reduce gap between rich and poor.

Yes, increase refuse collections or allow members of the public to drop off household waste and Recycling to a designated point, as the tips and Recycling centres won't take household waste

I think there should be a review of services and essential services should remain as is and non-essential should be reviewed. I'd suggest a consultation for what is deemed essential

No, these are what we pay council tax for and need our living areas to be well maintained

Look at selling buildings and place staff from that building into another one which is half full

Although some may not be used that much (certain libraries or mobile libraries for example) that doesn't take away from the importance of them for those who do use them and this should also be considered not just number of users. Combining services such as one 4 all centres / libraries/ leisure centres can reduce cost without having to reduce hours.

I do not think you should change refuse collections. Living in terraced houses, people do not have nowhere to store waste for longer than a week.

Provision should be protected at current levels. Investment should be made in 'green initiatives' within these service areas e.g., soft plastic recycling at the kerbside, incentives to encourage people to leave their car at home, improving energy efficiency of schools and leisure centres

Combining services to offer longer opening times. Leisure centres should have a bigger offering and make more money and should be part of a community centre that offers library services, local produce market, advice centre etc one stop shop instead of loads of inefficient buildings

The council should look to maximise the use of any facilities owned by schools. E.g., extend use of Treorchy comprehensive pool to the general public (as it's a heated pool and can be provided to the public outside school hours at nominal cost)

Council Tax

- 4.13 Respondents were asked whether they believe the Council should a) reduce service levels to close any budget gap and keep any increase in Council Tax to a minimum or b) protect as many Council services as possible at their current level by applying a reasonable increase in Council Tax to contribute to closing the budget gap.

68.3% of respondents answered that protecting services at current levels through a reasonable increase in Council Tax was preferable. 31.7% answered that they think the Council should cut services in order to minimise Council Tax increases.

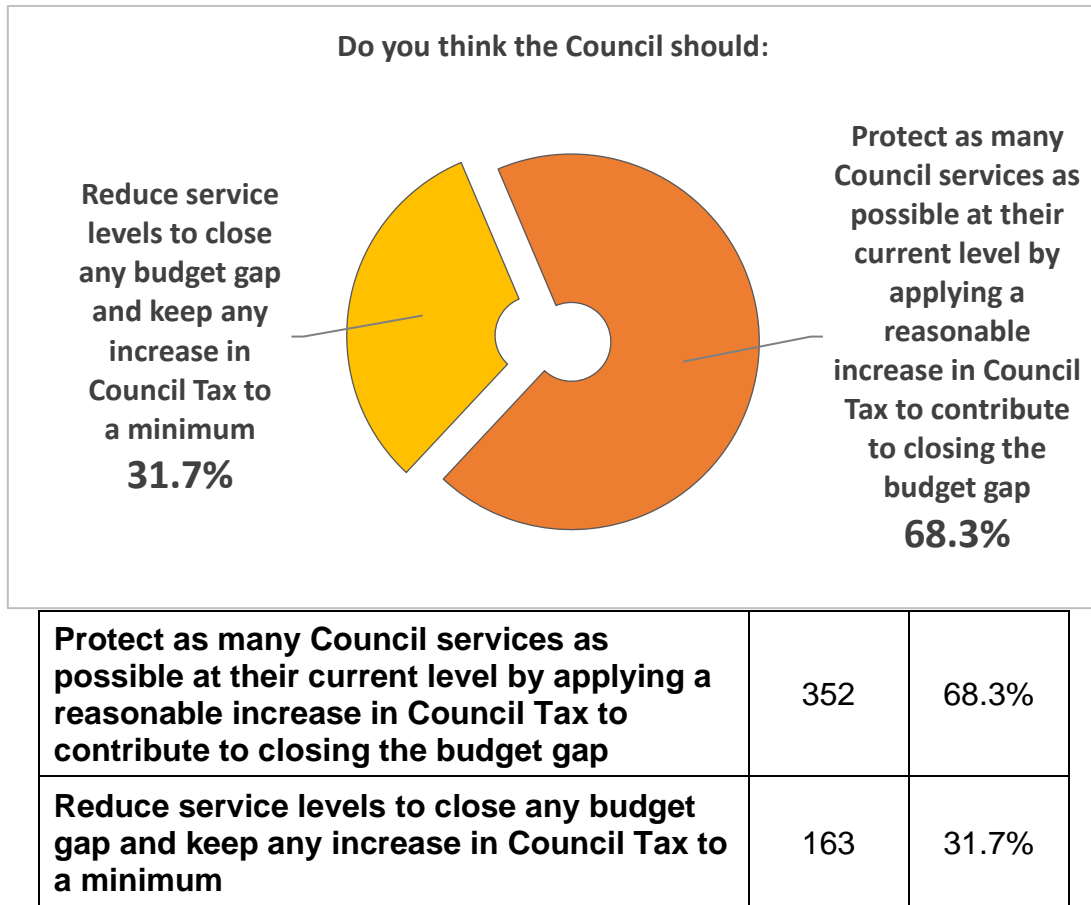
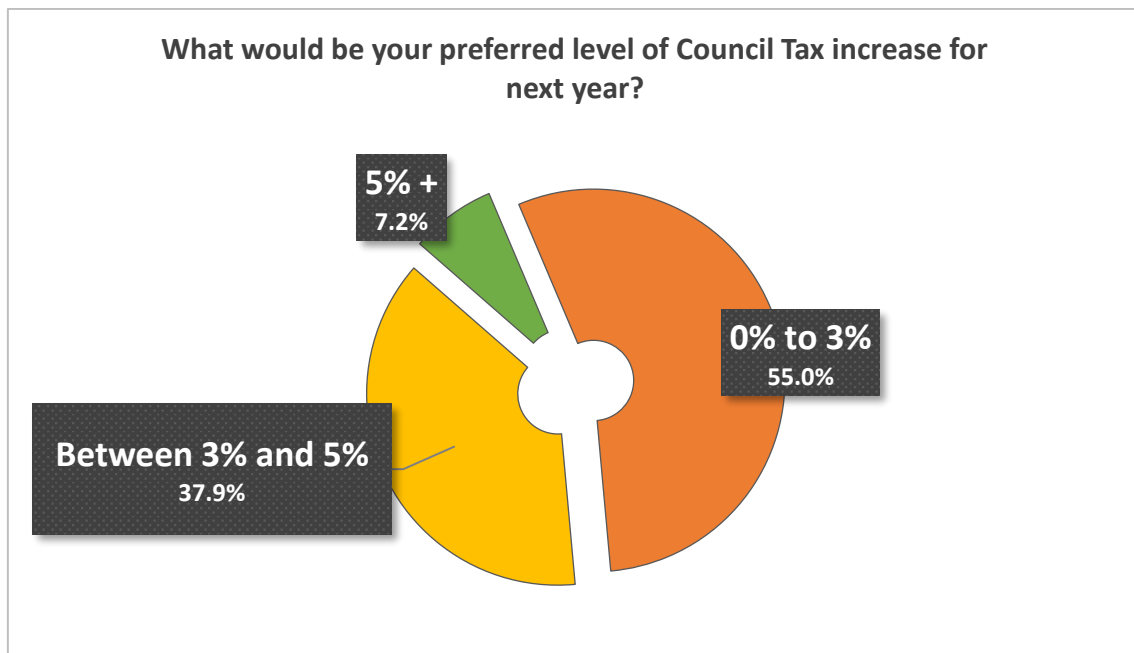


Figure 6 – Council Tax

In the budget meeting with OPAG, the group were in support of a Council Tax increase as it would provide the Council with further funding to support services which require it for instance social services.

Preferred level of Council Tax

4.14 Respondents were also asked to choose their preferred level of Council Tax increase for next year, with three options provided. 55% of respondents selected the lowest option of 0% - 3%, with 37.9% selecting the second band of between 3% and 5%. 7.2% of respondents selected the highest level of 5%+.



0% to 3%	283	55.0%
Between 3% and 5%	195	37.9%
5% +	37	7.2%

Figure 7 – Preferred Level of Council Tax

- 4.15 When asked for any general comments about Council Tax there were 200 responses. The majority of commenters voiced concern that any increase/large increases in Council Tax would add pressure to vulnerable and working families in RCT during the cost-of-living crisis, although many commenters also agreed that preserving service levels is very important. As in previous years, commenters often raised their perception that RCT Council Tax is already one of the highest in Wales and asked why further increases were necessary. Themes of efficiency, waste reduction and the need to reduce high levels of pay within RCT management structures were also raised a number of times.

A selection of comments is presented here. The full text of all comments received in the consultation are available for Cabinet and Officers to view.

Council tax is too high for the services provided, at this time of economic crisis there should be no increase in this tax.

My household bills have increased dramatically over the last year, and I would be extremely disappointed in the Council if council tax were to increase more than 1% in March 2023. I feel an increase of more than 1% would be extremely worrying for hard working families, in a time whereby people are already struggling to make ends meet.

Council can't be put up and services cut - this would be unfair to all council tax payers

Council Tax rises are inevitable but the council must be mindful that many households cannot continue to cover these additional costs year on year. The current council tax system is unfair and should be revised. A family of 4 living in a 3-bedroomed house is paying the same each year as a couple living in a one bedroomed property in the same band.

It is my observation that many people do not know about all the services that are available to them through the council. It would be good to have regular area community meetings and 'coffee' events that promote the services, in person. Get the local people become used to the consistency and dependability on going to their local hwbs.

I feel that an above 2% rise would be acceptable to add as much to the pot as possible to make the cuts as light as possible.

With the cost of living rising at a rapid rate, families are already choosing between heating and eating. An increase in priority bills isn't what they need!

Nobody's pay seems to go up. It would show compassion to hard working families if you can keep it at current levels.

Efficiencies

- 4.16 Respondents were provided with the following statement regarding efficiencies and asked whether they thought this was a good strategy.

Each year in balancing our budget and ensuring the effective use of resources, all our service managers are required to contribute toward a council-wide efficiency (savings) target. This means that all of our services are becoming more efficient without impacting on front line services, and, over the past decade in excess of £100M of savings have been delivered that represents a reduction of 19% of the Council's budget.

The majority of respondents (91.7%) thought this was a good strategy.

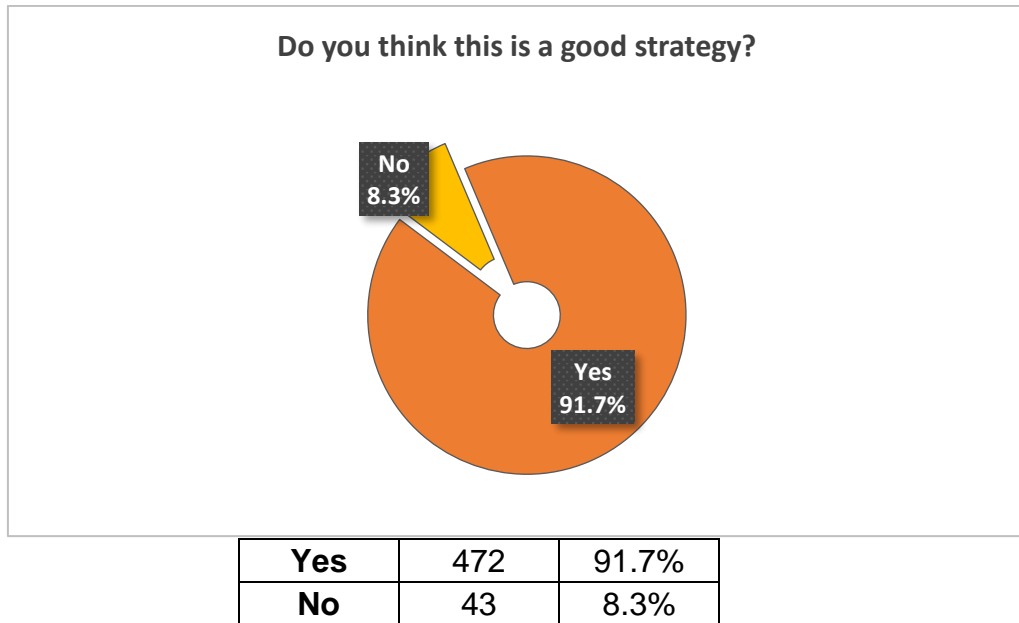


Figure 8 – Efficiency Strategy Agreement

4.17 89.5% of respondents said that we should continue to expect our managers to deliver more efficient services in the future.

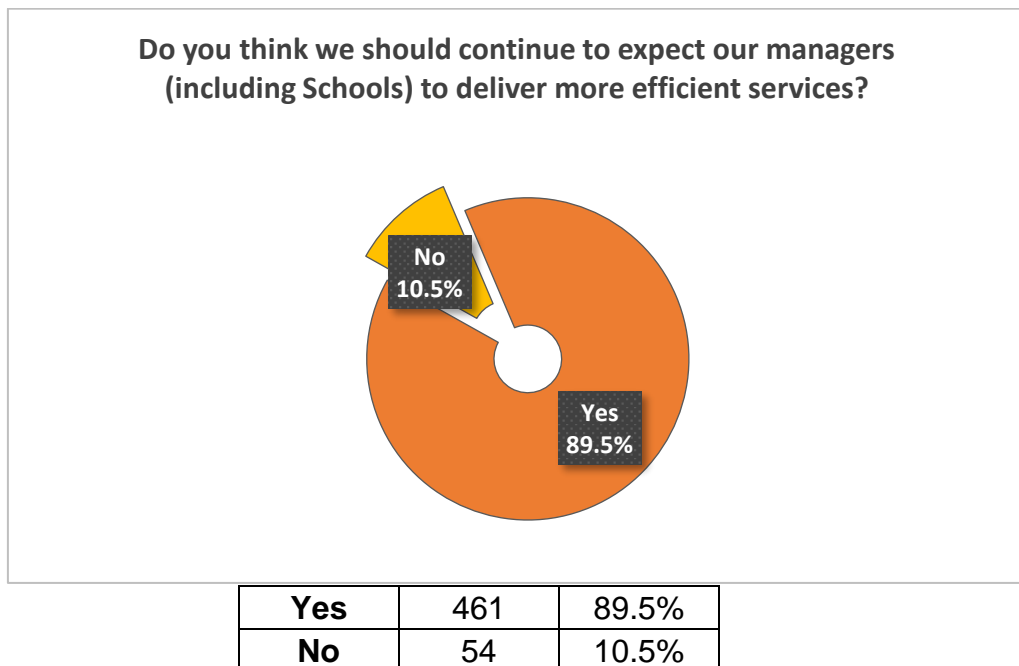


Figure 9 – Manager Efficiency Agreement

4.18 Respondents were then asked if they had any suggestions for greater efficiencies within the Council, or examples of ways in which the Council is not currently as efficient as it could be. The word cloud/map below provides a simple illustrated snapshot of some of the key themes in the comments received.

More service areas should move online, especially for booking sport and leisure activities. The council should look to reduce its office space and create working spaces in building they need to keep open.

traffic and roadworks. I feel that planning isn't as efficient as it could be, and a lot of money and scope is used sub-contracting.

efficiency savings is a finite concept. It eventually reduces quality

Review levels of structure, more efficiency in processes - fewer senior managers, more ground level workers getting things done

Investing / developing more renewable energy locally I.e., utilise council. Land to build council owned solar farms / wind farms that reduces energy costs for council.

Yes reduce the amount of councillors. They are generally overpaid and not value for money. There should only be one in each town.

Amount of council buildings. Many councils have one big office / civic whereby 95% staff are based rather than buildings all over the place.

As long as being efficient does not mean job cuts and poorer services. Some departments, the only resource is staff

Councillors should be voluntary, and claim reasonable travel expenses, if paid then no expenses, how much is paid for a Mayor, not needed.

Continued evaluation and implementation (where appropriate) of resource consolidation / utilisation with neighbouring councils where unnecessary duplication occurs - this is particularly important where capital expenditure / equipment is needed

Council Reserves

- 4.20 Respondents were asked if they think the Council should continue with the Reserves strategy, described as:

Reserves play an important part of the overall financial management of the Council. A significant amount of the Council's reserves are set aside for the three-year Capital Programme, which funds large investments and projects. The Council's General Reserve balances at 31st March 2022 amounted to £10.2M. The level of general reserves are kept under on-going review alongside the financial risks the Council faces.

75.1% of respondents agreed that the Council should continue with this strategy.

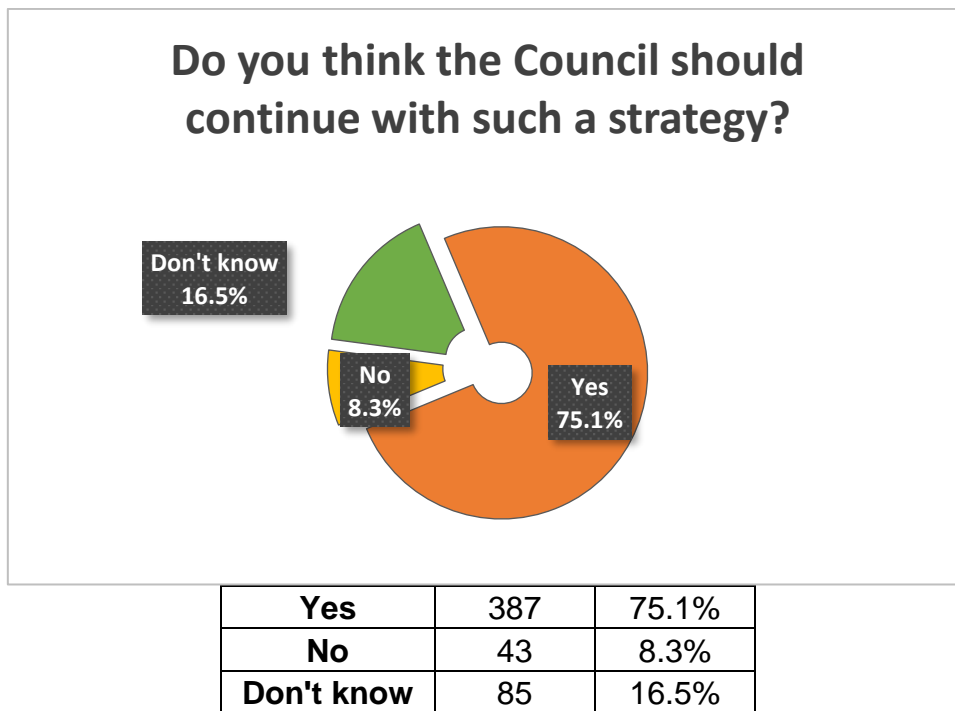


Figure 11 – Council Reserves Strategy

- 4.21 Respondents were invited to give any other comments they have on the budget.

A number of comments were received stating that reserves should be used to supplement the budget rather than saved. Other themes raised largely echo those already discussed in other open questions in this report, including building efficiencies, staffing, concern over cuts and so on. Multiple commenters raised a need for Welsh Government and Westminster to provide more funding to Councils.

Many of the commenters recognised the difficulties of reduced funding from central government and increased costs of providing services.

From OPAG, the group were in support of the strategy as they recognised the importance of Council reserves for issues such as flooding.

The Council's Priorities

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

Digitalisation (*taking the opportunity new technology provides to deliver better services for residents, visitors, businesses and how we operate internally*)

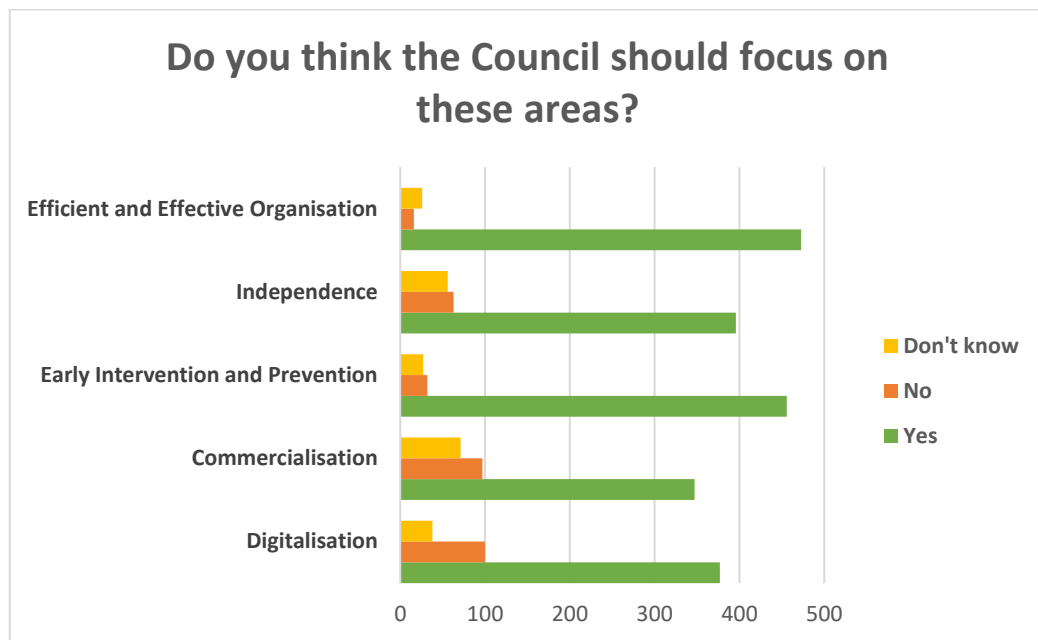
Commercialisation (*utilising our scale and expertise to deliver services for other organisations and customers and thereby generate income*)

Early Intervention and Prevention (*investing in preventative services to deliver savings in the medium term*)

Independence (*reshaping our services for vulnerable residents to ensure that we promote independence and deliver first class care services*)

Efficient and Effective Organisation (*challenging our ongoing service delivery and driving out further efficiencies through for example, a reduction in administration costs and reducing property costs linked to new ways of working*)

4.23 Respondents were asked if they thought the Council should focus on these key areas. The majority of respondents agreed with all of the key areas, with the highest level of agreement being for Efficient and Effective Organisation (91.8%).



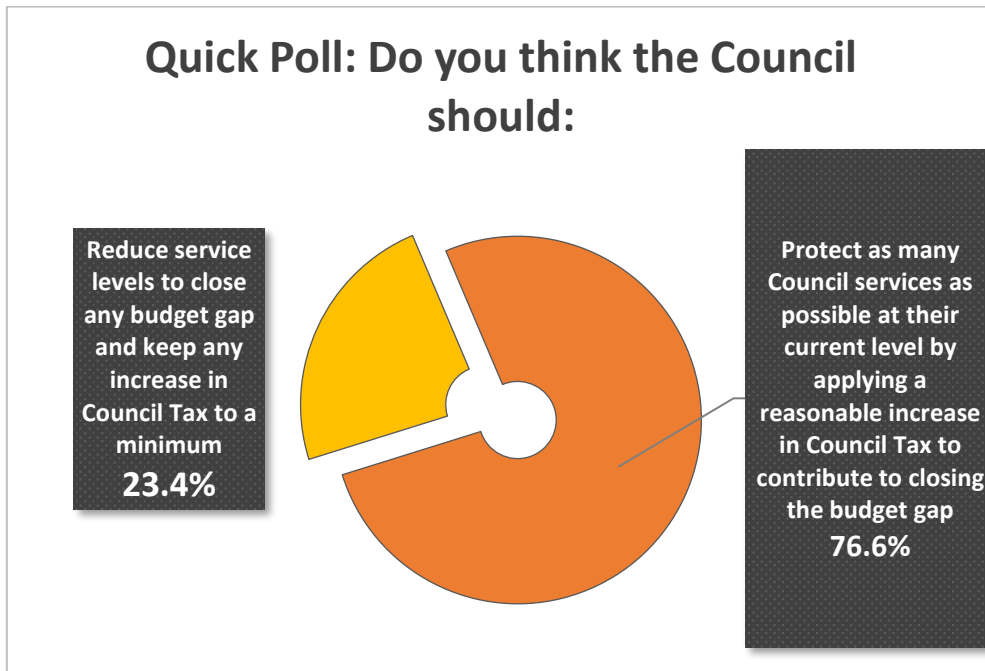
	Yes		No		Don't know	
Digitalisation	377	73.2%	100	19.4%	38	7.4%
Commercialisation	347	67.4%	97	18.8%	71	13.8%
Early Intervention and Prevention	456	88.5%	32	6.2%	27	5.2%
Independence	396	76.9%	63	12.2%	56	10.9%
Efficient and Effective Organisation	473	91.8%	16	3.1%	26	5.0%

Figure 12 – Council Areas of Focus

Members of OPAG agreed that the council should focus on these 5 areas; however, noted that further support needs to be provided in relation to digitalisation as some households cannot afford WIFI. They suggested there is a need to introduce free WIFI across the Borough.

Poll Results

- 4.24 In line with one of the survey question, visitors to the Let’s Talk Budget website were asked in a Quick Poll whether they believe the Council should a) reduce service levels to close any budget gap and keep any increase in Council Tax to a minimum or b) protect as many Council services as possible at their current level by applying a reasonable increase in Council Tax to contribute to closing the budget gap.
- 4.25 Of the 525 responses received, a majority of 76.6% (402) answered “Protect as many Council services as possible at their current level by applying a reasonable increase in Council Tax to contribute to closing the budget gap.”



Protect as many Council services as possible at their current level by applying a reasonable increase in Council Tax to contribute to closing the budget gap	402	76.6%
Reduce service levels to close any budget gap and keep any increase in Council Tax to a minimum	123	23.4%

Figure 13 – Quick Poll 1: Council Tax Increase

About You

- 4.26 Respondents were asked to select one or more descriptor of their situation as an interested party in this consultation. The majority of respondents stated that they were local residents (85.8%), and 26.8% of respondents stated that they are employees of the Council.

A local resident	442	85.8%
A local business	18	3.5%
An employee of the Council	138	26.8%
A member of a voluntary/ community group	24	4.7%
Other	8	1.6%

Figure 14 – Respondent Categories

- 4.27 Respondents were asked whether they felt the proposals would impact them due to their protected characteristics. The majority of respondents did not state any perceived impact, did not reply or stated that they felt the question was irrelevant.

Amongst the replies that did identify a perceived impact, themes were: greater impact on older people due to reduced income and increasing cost of living; a negative impact on people with disabilities if services are cut; a greater impact on anyone facing reduced income or stagnant wages, whether due to age, disability or other circumstances; a loss of accessible services if opening hours/ times are reduced; a greater impact on single people and single parents due to increased bills and stagnant or reduced income; a greater impact on older or disabled people if waste collections are changed.

- 4.28 Respondents were asked whether they felt the proposals would impact the use or promotion of the Welsh Language, and how they felt the positive impacts on the Welsh Language could be increased. As with the previous question, the majority of respondents did not state any perceived impact, did not reply or stated that they felt the question was irrelevant.

Amongst the replies that did state a perceived impact or make suggestions, main themes included: appreciation for Council promotion of the Welsh Language; concern over the perceived costs of providing bilingual materials; a focus on children's Welsh Language learning.

Instagram

4.29 Four polls were also carried out via the Council's official Instagram account, receiving between 133 and 191 views each and between 45 and 3 responses each.

4.30 In the first poll, viewers were asked "What is the Council's net revenue budget gap projected to be for 2023/24?"

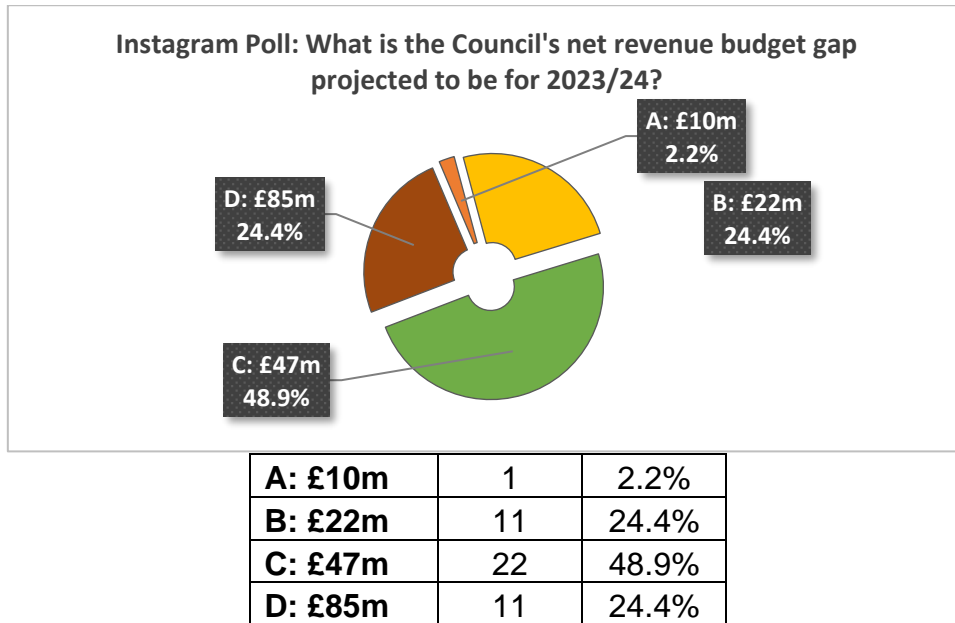


Figure 15 – Instagram Poll 1 – Budget Gap

4.31 In the second poll, viewers were asked "Do you think the Council should provide sufficient resources to fully cover increased pay and cost pressures in our schools despite the significant budget gap?"

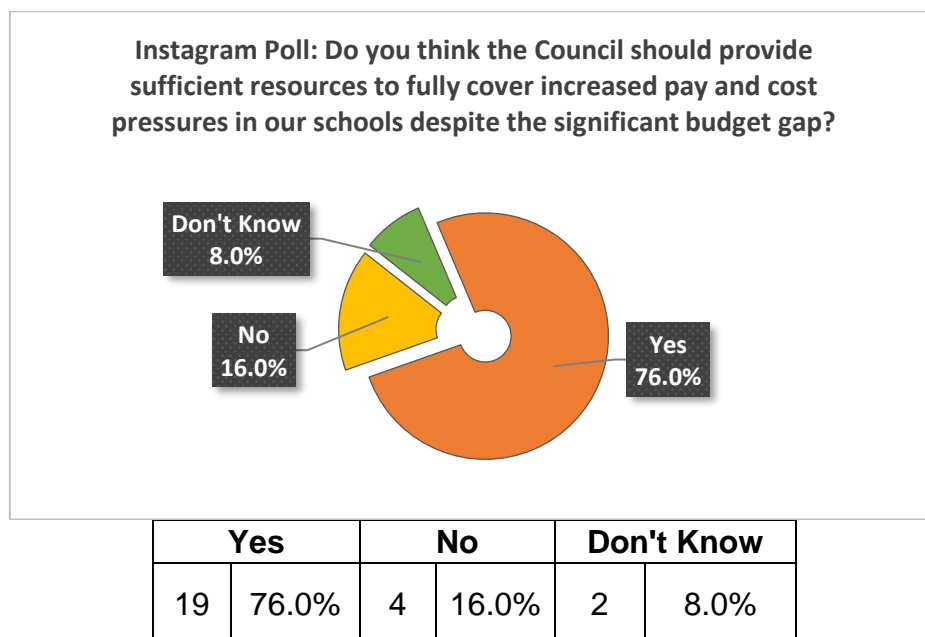


Figure 16 – Instagram Poll 2 – Schools

4.32 In the third poll, viewers were asked “Do you think the Council should continue to prioritise social services as a key area for additional investment?”

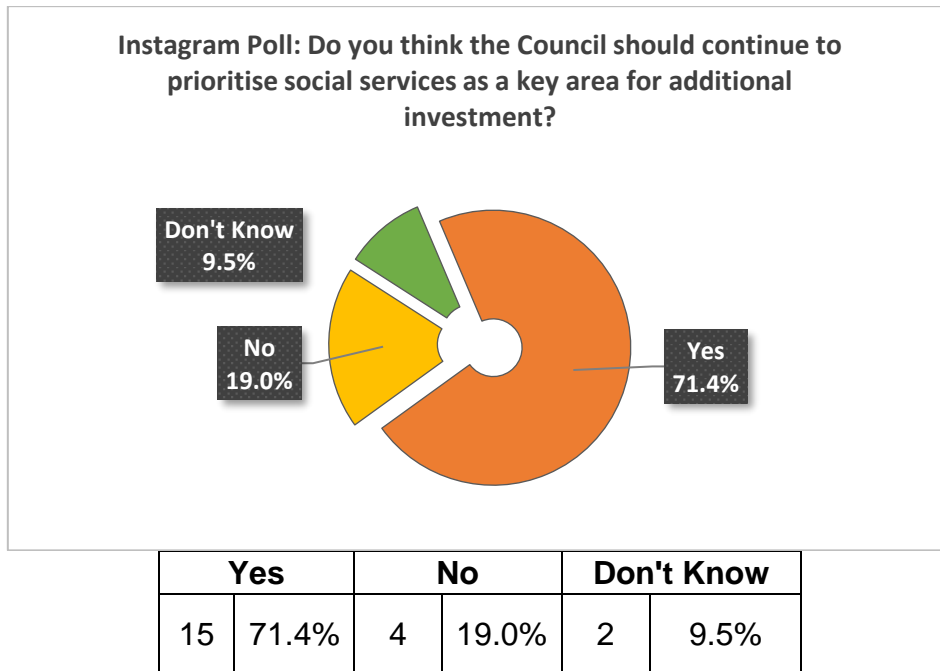


Figure 17 – Instagram Poll 3 – Social Services

4.33 In the final poll, viewers were asked:
 Climate Change: Which areas should the Council focus on being more efficient in to reach our 2030 Net Zero target?

- Renewable Energy
- Waste
- Transport/Active Travel
- Biodiversity/Nature
- Development
- Raising Climate Awareness
- Working with Third Sector
- Sustainable Food

There were three responses to this question: “Buildings”, “Waste”, “Convert grass verges to meadow plant areas”.

5. Community Conversations

5.1 This section outlines the results of the three face-to-face engagement events which took place at the following locations:

Trailer Event 1:	Pontypridd Mill Street	30/11/2022 (10-1pm)
Trailer Event 2:	Tonypandy Dunraven Street	2/12/2022 (9-12pm)
Trailer Event 3:	Aberdare Town Centre by Library	7/12/2022 (10-1pm)

Overall, 256 people engaged in phase 1 of the Councils Budget Consultation for 2023/24.

5.2 To engage with the public, recycling trailers were set at three different locations in RCT. Members of the public were invited to have discussions with Consultation and Finance Officers regarding the Councils budget for 2023/24, and how the Council can be more efficient as we move into the new financial year whilst facing a budget gap of £47 million. Two boards were used to engage with the public consisting of the following questions:

1. *What service areas provided by the Council are important to you?*
2. *Are there any specific areas where you think the Council should be more efficient / any examples of not being efficient?*
3. *What areas should the Council focus on to achieve Net Zero by 2030 and why?*

Figure 18 highlights how comments made by the public were gathered.

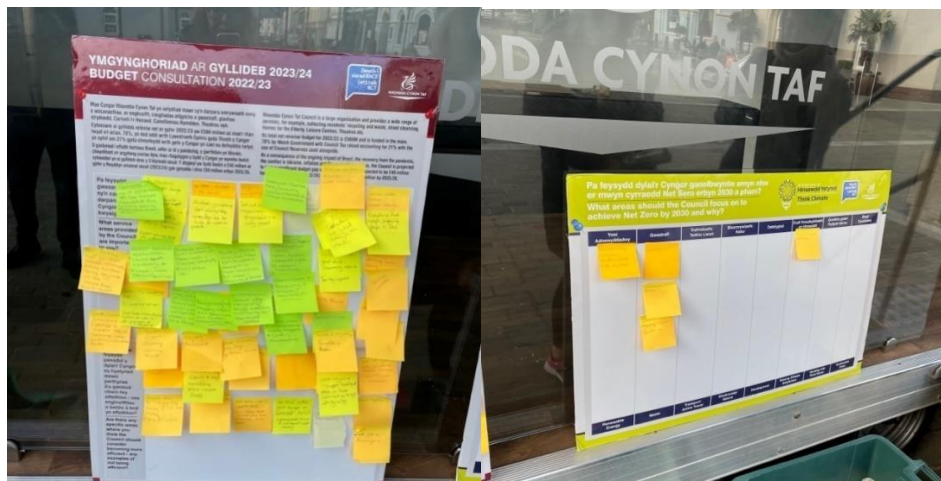


Figure 18 – Public Engagement Board

5.3 Comments received from the public in relation to other areas were also noted down and directed towards the relevant officers to action.

5.4 The comments noted during events were categorised into broader themes, as reported below. The full text of all comments received are available for Cabinet and Officers to view.

Waste and recycling dominated a number of comments, though it is important to note that the events took place in Waste and Recycling vehicles, and many people first approached staff in order to collect recycling bags or ask about these areas.

Many members of the community were concerned with care and services for older people, children and vulnerable people. Again, it is important to note that all of these events took place during weekday mornings and early afternoons, which appeared to affect the demographic of involvement. Staff reported that many of those who took part in the questions were older people and parents or carers of young children.

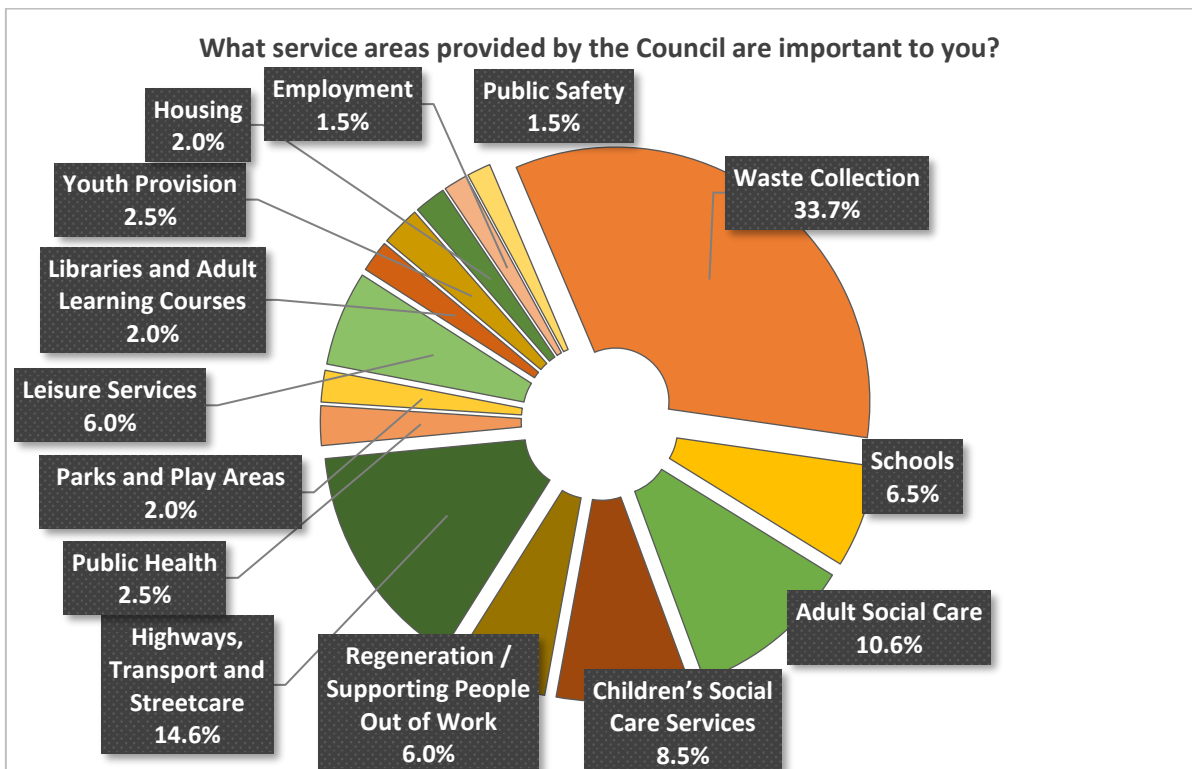


Figure 19 – Service Areas

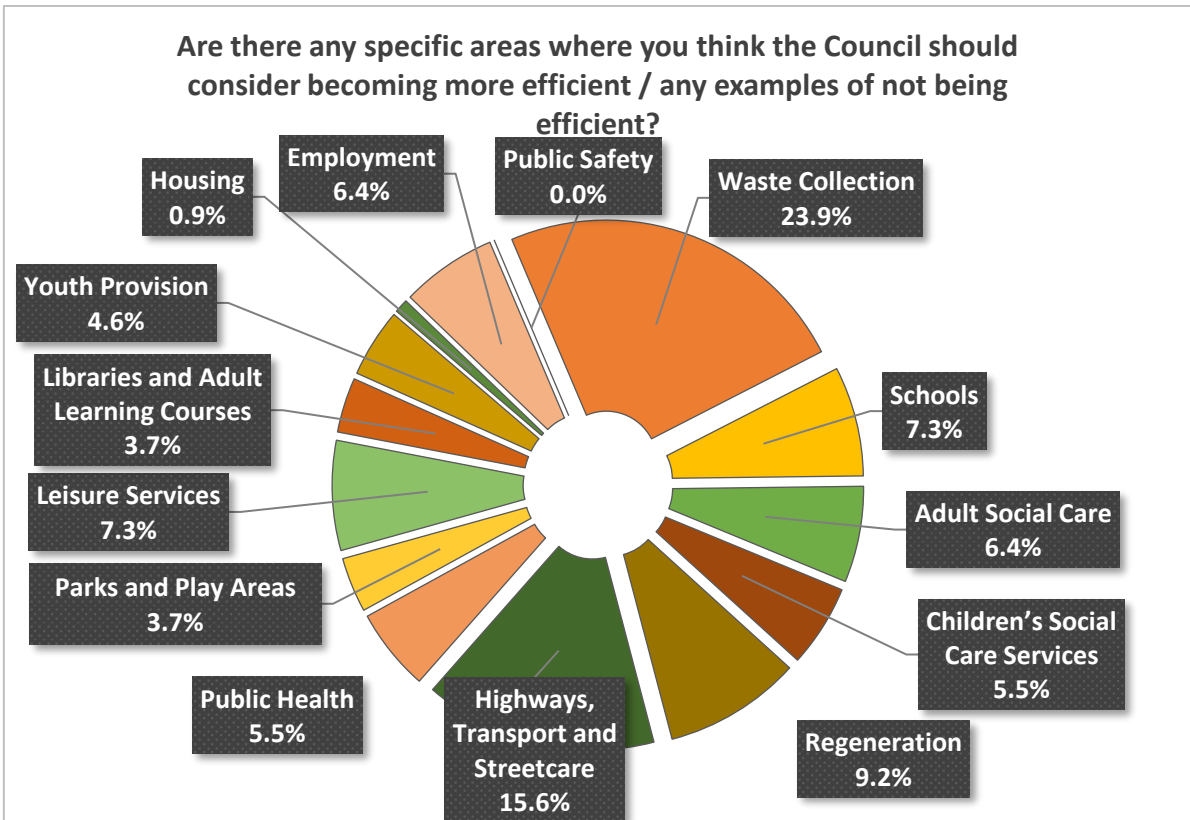


Figure 20 – Efficiencies

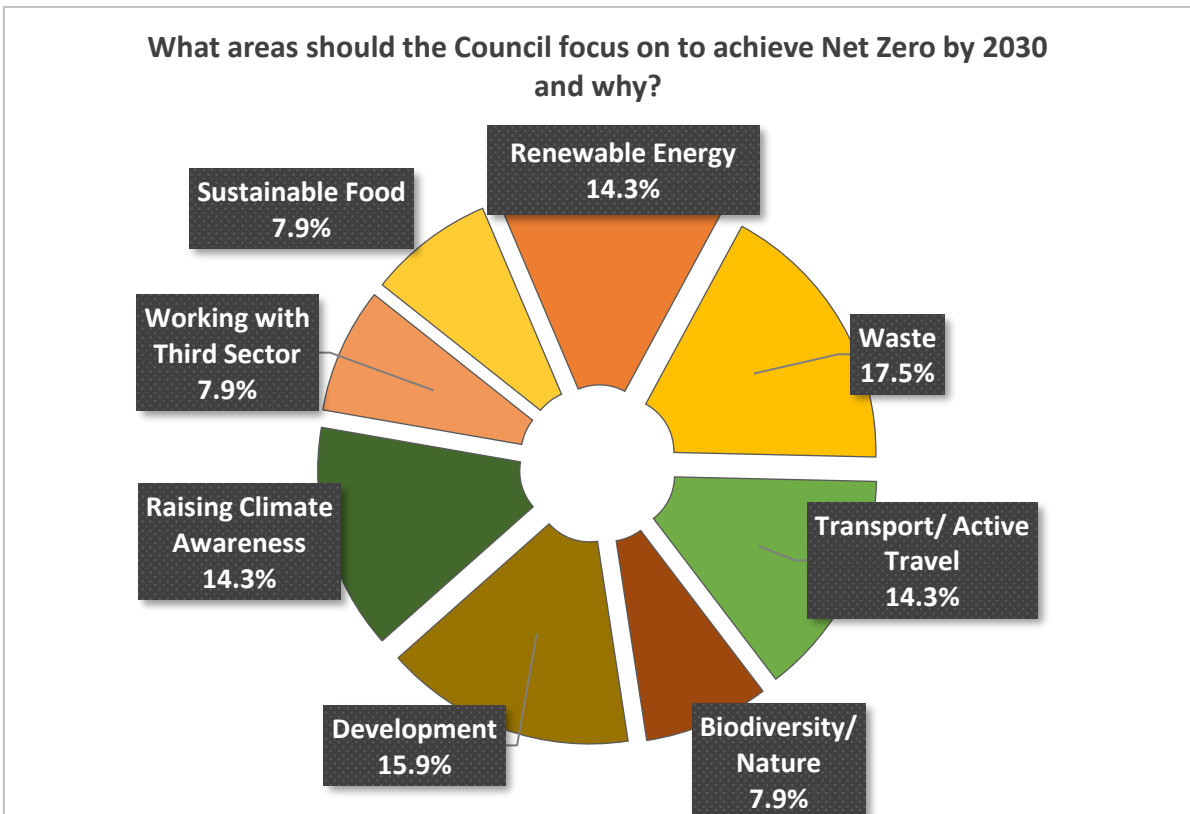


Figure 21 – Climate Change

6. YOUNG PERSONS ENGAGEMENT

- 6.1 A face-to-face engagement exercise took place at St. John Baptist Church in Wales High School in Aberdare. Valuable insight was received on pupils' opinions towards the importance of Councils services and the Councils Budget towards schools in 2023/24.
- 6.2 The session was attended by members of the Consultation Team along with a Finance Officer. During the session the young people were taken through a short presentation with discussion prompts and questions from the full budget consultation.
- 6.3 The questions were centred towards Fees and Charges, Council Service Priorities, Efficiencies, and the School Budget. The session was well supported by their teacher and all young people engaged well with the format. A summary of their responses is highlighted below.
- 6.4 **Fees and Charges**

We asked the group whether they felt there should be changes to the range of Council fees and charges, providing the option for fees and charges to be frozen, decreased or increased and why.

Fees & Charges

- Fees and Charges provide income which can help the council to provide important services.
- The Council raises £23M a year from fees and charges to support services.

Which ones would you freeze / decrease / increase?
Why?

Leisure Centre (Pay & Play)
Sport Club Playing Fees
Car Parking Charges
Cinema (Colliseum/Parc and Dare entrance fee)
Fines for dropping litter
Pontypridd Lido – (entry fee for adult users 16+)

Icons: A swimmer, a recycling symbol, and a cinema clapperboard.

Logo: HAVE YOUR DWEUD SAY EICH DWEUD

Figure 22 - Council Fees and Charges slide

Comments included:

Freeze

“Leisure Centres, Sport Club, Cinema and the Lido should be frozen as they are play an important role towards mental health, physical benefits and socialising”

Increase

“Increase litter fines to prevent people from littering in the streets”

“Increase car parking charges to encourage people to walk and it will be better for the environment as not so many fumes will be released into the air”

“Increase parking fines, and that money can be used towards other services which need it”

6.5 There was a general agreement to increase charges for litter fines to deter people from dropping litter. Various comments highlighted the need to freeze services such as Leisure Centres, Sport Club fees and Lido Entrance as the students noted the importance of these services within a community to encourage socialisation, fitness, and good mental health. The group did note to increase car parking charges however recognised the impact this may have towards regeneration within town centres.

6.6 **Priorities**

We asked the group to identify Council services were important to them. We provided a list of service areas and discussions were held around which ones the group felt should be a priority for the Council.



Figure 23 - Priorities presentation slide

6.7 All students noted the most important services for the Council to maintain were Social Services, Schools, Public Health, Highways and Transport, Streetcare and Waste services. Surprisingly the students were not that concerned with Climate Change and advised that the Council should pause funding to climate changes at the moment and focus on other areas.

Comments included:

“Music services should not be a priority for the Council as it’s not that important at the moment.”

“Schools should introduce more opportunities for Drama lessons as those are not available for those in lower years”

“Climate Change should not be a focus at the moment, as the world is currently doing okay with climate change tackling, we can put a hold on it for now”

“Council should invest more money on creating more classes with fewer students to encourage more one to one session with teachers”

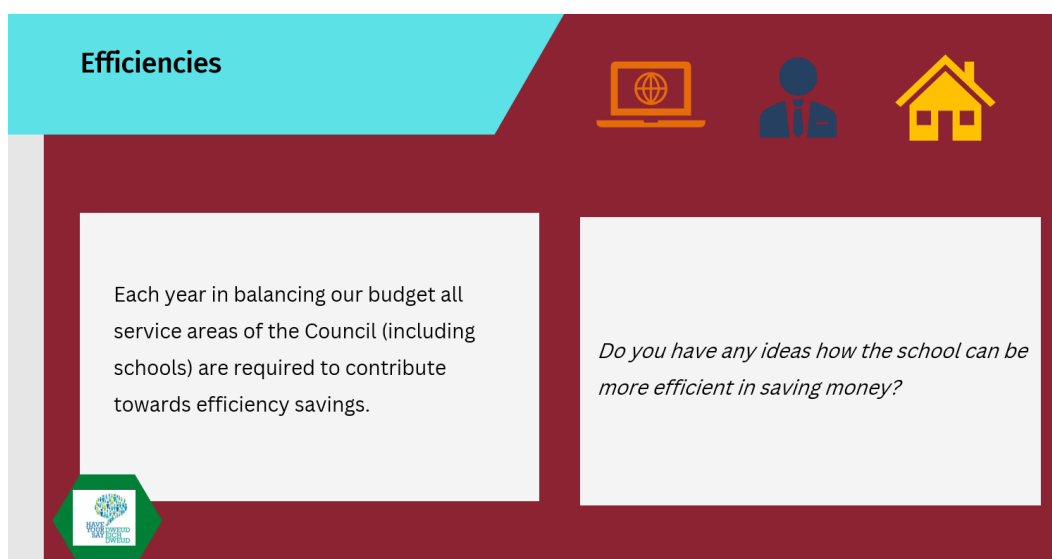
“Aberdare Town Centre is dead; the Council should invest in the town centres so that young people have something to do”

6.8 The group had a divide in terms of the provision of Music services offered in schools; some noted the importance of this services as a means of expression and increased confidence. The group noted the importance of the Council providing further funding towards Drama lessons within the lower classes as these lessons are not offered which is disappointing for some students.

6.9 Further funding on schools was seen as very important; students suggested the Council to build more classes with fewer students in order to encourage more one to one support with teachers. It was noted that there are too many students in one class which can be a distraction and reduce the amount of support provided.

6.10 **Efficiencies**

As the Council faces a £47 million budget gap, we asked the group how they think their school could be more efficient in saving money. As part of the school being more efficient and saving money, the students advised the need for increased recycling within their schools, using less paper, car sharing for teachers, and ensuring to turn off the lights after using the room.



The slide features a teal header with the word "Efficiencies" in white. To the right of the header are three icons: a laptop with a globe, a person in a suit, and a yellow house. The main content area is divided into two white boxes. The left box contains text about budget balancing and efficiency savings. The right box contains a question about school efficiency ideas. A small circular logo is in the bottom left corner.

Efficiencies

Each year in balancing our budget all service areas of the Council (including schools) are required to contribute towards efficiency savings.

Do you have any ideas how the school can be more efficient in saving money?

Figure 24 - Efficiencies presentation slide

6.11 School Budget

We asked whether the group agreed with the Council's approach to protect and prioritise the schools' budget; they all agreed that the Council should continue to provide funding for schools. They advised that the additional funding has provided substantial improvements within schools, for instance more subjects being offered. They however emphasised a need to re-introduce drama classes within the lower classes.

Schools

- The Council aims to protect and increase the school budget.
- Since 2013/14 the overall schools' budget has increased by over 28% compared to the Council's overall budget increase by 11%.
- The Council is committed to continue to support schools and is proposing to increase the schools budget next year, covering increased pay costs and day to day running costs of schools (e.g energy, equipment, consumables).

What do you think about this approach?




Figure 25 - Schools Budget presentation slide

6.12 **Comments included:**

“The Council should continue to provide this level of funding to schools every year”

“Schools are very important and should be maintained for us now and those coming after us”

“The Council should provide more funding towards drama lessons for the lower grades, it's very important”

6.13 Instagram YEPS

Instagram

Budget content was created and shared on the YEPS Instagram account. A total of 3 stories were shared aiming to get young people's views on Schools, Social Care, and Climate change. A link to the Let's Talk Budget Consultation was included within the post where young people could further engage by completing the main survey and polls.

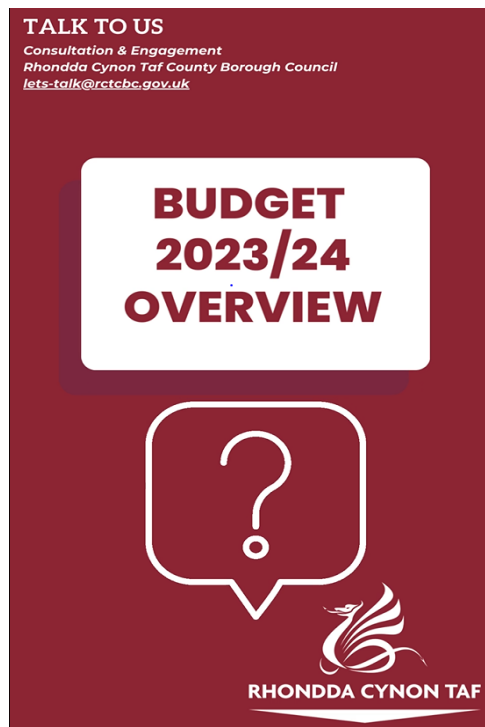


Figure 26 – YEPS RCT Instagram post for the Budget Consultation

6.14 In total there were 23 young people who engaged with the social media posts, the table below highlights the number of views and those who participated per Instagram post:

Question:	Views	Number Engaged
<p>Story 1: Do you think the Council should provide sufficient resources to fully cover increased pay and cost pressures in our schools despite the significant budget gap?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes - No - Don't Know 	202	16
<p>Story 2: Do you think the Council should continue to prioritise social services as a key area for additional investment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes - No - Don't Know 	181	7
<p>Story 3: Which areas should the Council focus on being more efficient in to reach our 2030 Net Zero target?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Renewable Energy - Waste - Transport/Active Travel - Biodiversity/Nature - Development - Raising Climate Awareness - Working with Third Sector <p>Sustainable Food</p>	169	0

Figure 27 - Instagram Story Views YEPS

6.15 The Council has always aimed to maximise the resources it provides to schools; since 2013/14 the overall school's budget has increased by over 28% as compared to the Councils overall budget increasing by 11%. The total school budget is £147.9M for the financial year 2022/23. The Council is committed to continue supporting schools and is proposing to increase the schools budget next year.

6.16 Based on **Story 1**, 16 votes were received, the majority of which agreed that the Council should continue to provide resources for schools to cover pay and non-pay costs.

Story 1: Councils Budget and Schools

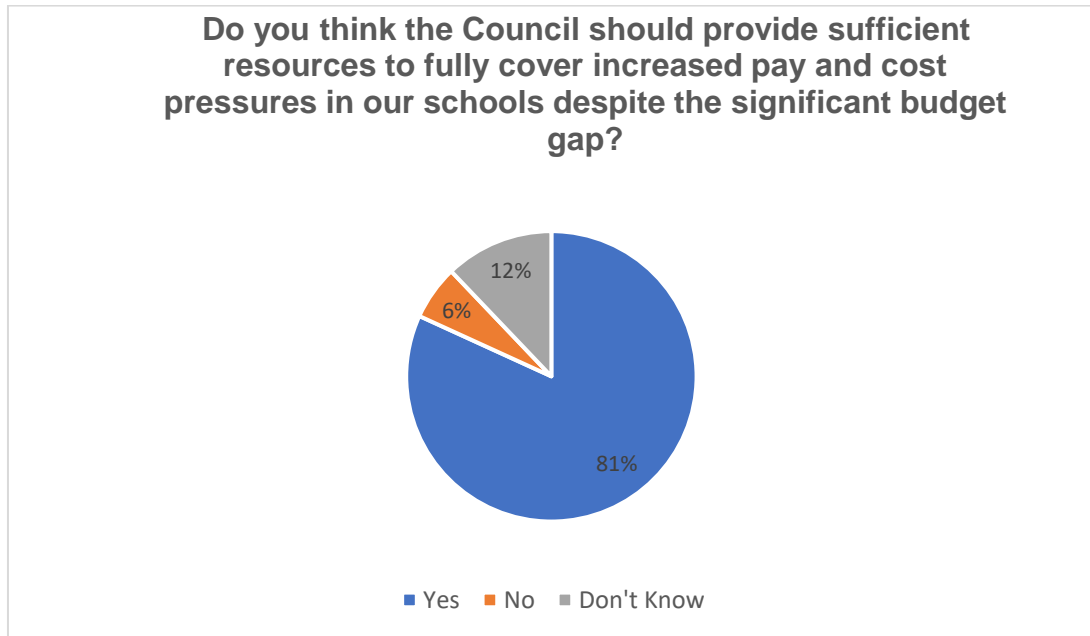


Figure 28 – School Budget Instagram Story Poll

6.17 The Council recognises the essential role social services play in supporting the most vulnerable people, families and children in our communities. Over 28% of the Councils budget supports Adult Social Services and Children’s Social Services. During the past three years, the budget for these areas has increased by £21M (around 15%).

6.18 Based on **Story 2**, 7 votes were received, the majority agreeing that Social Services should be a priority within the Council.

Story 2: Councils Budget and Social Care

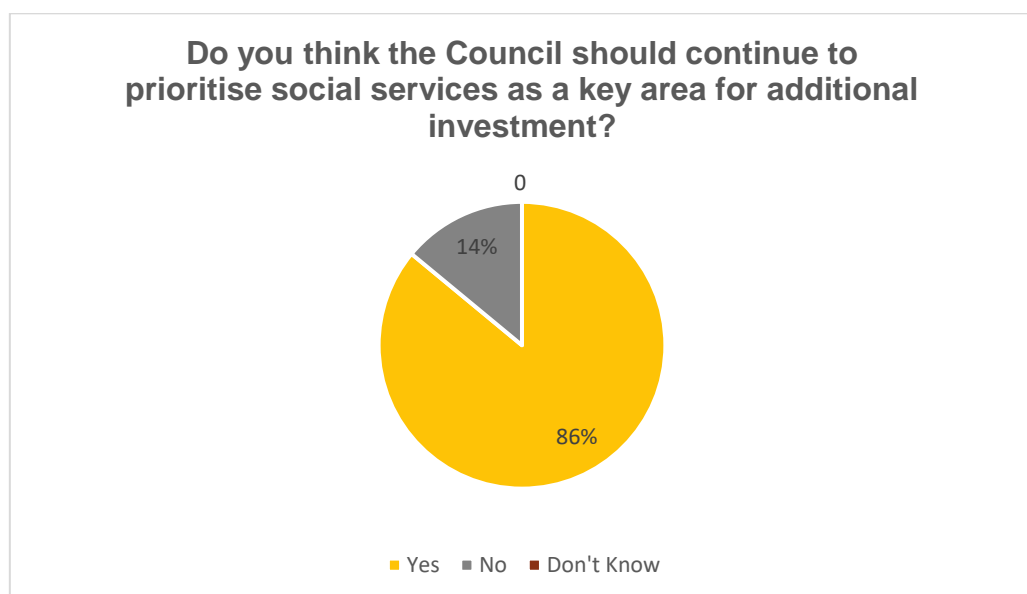


Figure 29 – Social Services Instagram poll

6.19 The Council is committed to reaching its target of being Net Zero by 2030; In order to do so, the Council will be focusing on a variety of areas:

- Renewable Energy
- Waste
- Transport/Active Travel
- Biodiversity/Nature
- Development
- Raising Climate Awareness
- Working with Third Sector
- Sustainable Food

6.20 As part of the **Story 3**, there was no engagement from young people regarding how the Council could achieve its Net Zero target by 2030.

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PHASE 1 BUDGET CONSULTATION (2023/24)

((EXTRACT OF DRAFT MINUTES – SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE))

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE -
Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on
Tuesday, 29 November 2022 at 5.00 pm.**

County Borough Councillors – Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance
in the Chamber:

Cllr G Hughes (Chair presiding)
Cllr S Morgans
Cllr M Ashford

County Borough Councillors in attendance virtually:

Cllr J Bonetto
Cllr Sera Evans
Cllr Sheryl Evans
Cllr C Middle
Cllr K Morgan
Cllr G Warren
Cllr G Williams

Officers in attendance:

P Mee – Group Director – Community and Children’s Services
C Hanagan – Service Director – Democratic Services and Communication
N Elliot – Director of Adult Services
P Griffiths – Service Director – Finance and Improvement Services
Democratic Services Officers: S Daniel, J Nicholls and J Crockett

Item ID	24365
Item Title	Declarations of Interest
Summary	None
	Cllr C Middle declared a personal interest in Item 6

Item ID	24366
Item Title	Minutes
Summary	RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting of the 7 November 2022 were

	approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting
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Item ID	24725
Item Title	Consultation Links
Summary	The Principal Scrutiny Officer advised Members of the consultation links that were available to them for information. She advised if Members had any queries in relation to the consultation they could speak with the Democratic Services Team

Extract from the minutes

Item ID	24719
Item Title	2023/24 Budget Consultation
Summary	<p>The Service Director Democratic Services and Communication introduced the report to Members to provide the opportunity for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to respond and contribute to the Council's phase 1 2023/24 Budget Consultation process.</p> <p>With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Service Director Finance and Improvement Services provided Members with an overview of: the Council's 2022/23 financial position and outlook over the medium term; general approach for 2023/24 (in respect of the phase 1 budget consultation process); 2023/24 Budget Setting – key strategic building blocks; the Council's Priorities; and Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS). The Service Director indicated that the overview of these areas intended to assist Members in formulating their feedback, in line with the Committee's Terms of Reference and being a consultee as part of the 2023/24 Budget Consultation process.</p> <p>Following conclusion of the presentation, Members were invited to provide their feedback on the key strategic building blocks, the Council's priorities and CTRS. Members fed back the following comments and observations:</p> <p>Schools</p> <p>The Service Director – Finance and Improvement Services requested feedback from the Committee on 'Do you think the Council should provide sufficient resources to fully cover increased pay and non-pay cost pressures in our schools?' and 'Do you think an efficiency saving should be built into the schools budget?'</p> <p>One Member asked what level of reserves schools were holding and fed back that Schools should be utilising reserves as part of their financial planning and contributing to the Council's budget setting arrangements.</p> <p>Another Member disagreed with this point as schools held different levels of reserves and the Council should take this into account in allocating an efficiency saving requirement. The Member added that children's education was hugely disrupted during the pandemic and any efficiency savings will</p>

continue to impact on the ability of schools to support pupils catch up; therefore the Council should provide sufficient resources to cover costs in schools.

Social Care

The Service Director requested feedback from the Committee on 'Do you think the Council should continue to prioritise social services as a key area for additional investment?'

Members were all in agreement that this area should be prioritised and the Council should continue to invest in this area as it supports the most vulnerable in our communities.

Fees and Charges

The Service Director requested feedback from the Committee on 'Do you think the requirement for fees and charges to be reviewed individually and the continued need to take into account the impact on service users is a reasonable approach (and not apply an across-the-board increase in line with the 12 month CPI rate (as at Oct 22) of 11.1%?'

Members agreed that any changes to fees and charges should be considered on a service-by-service basis and a blanket approach should not be taken. Members added that the Council should ensure services remain affordable to individuals in the community which should, in turn, support an uptake in the use of specific services.

Service levels

The Service Director requested feedback from the Committee on 'What service areas provided by the Council are important to you?' and 'Do you think the Council should consider changing the level of services for any of these and if so how? For example, reviewing the frequency that services are provided, or opening times, depending how often services are used?'

Members fed back that services for the vulnerable should be protected and any efficiencies should have minimum disruption to services.

Council Tax

The Service Director requested feedback from the Committee on 'Do you think the Council should increase Council Tax next year by '0% to 3%', 'between 3% and 5%' or '5%+'?' and 'The level of Council Tax versus maintaining or reducing service levels?'

Due to the current cost of living crisis, Members did not want to see an increase above the '3% - 5%' as residents are already facing increases to food, energy, rent/mortgage and fuel costs. Members also fed back that

they were keen to keep any increases to council tax as low as possible and, as part of this, minimise reductions in service levels.

Efficiencies

The Service Director requested feedback from the Committee on 'Do you support the Council's strategy on efficiencies?', 'Do you think we should continue to expect our managers to deliver more efficient services?' and 'Are there any specific areas where you think the Council could be more efficient / any examples of Council Services not being efficient?'

A Member asked if the Council is looking to sell some of its land and assets, taking into account their condition, to generate income. The Service Director fed back that the Council reviews its land and buildings on an on-going basis and plans and manages these arrangements via the Corporate Asset Management Plan to ensure the use of assets are optimised to support efficient service delivery. The Service Director added that where the on-going review process identifies options to dispose of assets, in line with service delivery requirements, the Council will progress such opportunities.

Another Member agreed with the Council strategy on efficiencies and fed back that the Council should continue to rely on its expert managers to be innovative and effective and review how we can do things better.

Council Reserves

The Service Director requested feedback from the Committee on 'Do you think the Council should continue with its strategy around the management of reserves?'

The Committee agreed that it is important to keep reserves at an adequate level, especially during the current very challenging and volatile financial environment. Another Member fed back that there should be more information given to the public on how the Council uses its reserves as the public have an expectation that reserves should be used during times of austerity.

Council Priorities

The Service Director requested feedback from the Committee on 'Do you think the Council should focus on the five key areas of digitisation, commercialisation, early intervention and prevention, Independence and Efficient and Effective Organisation to maximise resources and deliver improved services?'

Members agreed with the approach to the Council's priorities and fed back that leading the way on digitalisation will help support better outcomes for our residents.

Council Tax Reduction Scheme

The Service Director requested feedback from the Committee on the following:

Extended Payments – ‘Do you think that 4 weeks is a reasonable period to continue paying Council Tax Reduction when someone returns to work?’

Members agreed that a 4-week period is adequate and should be retained as this provides individuals with support as they return to work.

War disablement – ‘Do you think that it is reasonable for the Council to continue to totally exclude War Disablement and War Widow’s Pensions income when assessing entitlement to CTR Scheme?’

Members supported the exclusion of the whole amount of War Disablement Pensions and War Widow’s Pensions when calculating Council Tax Reduction Scheme entitlement.

Backdating claims – ‘Do you think that 6 months is a reasonable period to backdate claims for working age and pensioners?’

Members agreed that the backdated claim period of 6 months was adequate and should be retained.

RESOLVED:

1. Members provided feedback to the Council’s Phase 1 2023/24 Budget Consultation process.
2. Authorise the Service Director Democratic Services and Communication to formulate a response on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the Council’s Phase 1 2023/24 Budget Consultation process.

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SCHOOL BUDGET FORUM
(DRAFT MINUTES – SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE SCHOOL BUDGET FORUM)

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the School Budget Forum held on Thursday 24
November 2022 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT	<p>Councillor R Lewis (Chair) Councillor G Caple Councillor C Leyshon Councillor A Morgan Councillor M Norris Councillor M Webber</p> <p>Ms B Cheetham, Y Pant Comprehensive Mr C Coole, Darran Park Primary School Ms S Mitchell, St Johns Baptist CiW School Mr D Mogford, Maesgwyn Special School Mr P Morgan, Cwmaman Infants/Glynhafod Juniors Ms G Powell, Glenboi Primary School Mr A Roberts, Parc Lewis Primary School Mr C Spanswick, Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda Ms R Shellard, Cwmbach CiW Primary School Ms J Conway, Our Lady's RC Primary Ms N Poole, Blaengwawr Primary School Mr J Davies, Penygawsi Primary School Mr D Jones, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castellau Mr A Llewellyn, Gwaunmeisgyn Primary School</p> <p>Mr M Cleverley, NASUWT Rep Ms D Gibbons, Chair RCT GA Mr M Thomas, NEU Rep</p>
IN ATTENDANCE	<p>Ms G Davies Ms S Davies Ms C Edwards Mr P Griffiths Mr S Mithan Ms E Edmunds Mr C Hanagan Ms A Winter</p>
APOLOGIES	None.

Item ID	23324
Item Title	DECLARATION OF INTEREST
Summary	In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct there were no declarations pertaining to the agenda.

Item ID	23325
Item Title	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Summary	None.

Item ID	23326
Item Title	MINUTES
Summary	The minutes of the meeting of the School Budget Forum held on the 29 th September 2022, were approved as an accurate record.

Item ID	24552
Item Title	BUDGET CONSULTATION 2023/24 (PHASE 1)
Summary	<p>The Leader provided Members of the School Budget Forum with an overview of the preparatory work being undertaken by the Council as part of 2023/24 budget setting and explained that the current planning assumptions for schools is a proposed uplift of 6%+ that would equate to additional funding to schools of over £10M. The Leader acknowledged the very challenging environment that schools are operating within and provided assurance that the Council will be doing all it can to maximise the level of funding it allocates to schools, taking into account the provisional funding level the Council will receive from Welsh Government that will be announced in December 2022.</p> <p>The Leader informed School Budget Forum Members that the Council has published service change proposals in respect of moving to 3-weekly refuse collections and also the Meals on Wheels Service, this reflecting the very difficult financial outlook facing the Council, and these will be considered by Cabinet shortly to determine whether to proceed with consultation processes in relation to the proposed changes. The Leader also fed back that other proposals will need to be considered, due to the unprecedented budget gap facing the Council next year, and that the Council continues to work closely with Trade Union colleagues and has undertaken to do everything possible to avoid compulsory redundancies.</p> <p>The Leader indicated that the letter he circulated to all schools in October 2022 aimed to provide context on the very challenging financial outlook facing the Council, with an overspend for the current year projected to be £21M, driven by significant inflation and demand pressures, increased energy and contractor costs and the likelihood of a higher than budgeted 2022/23 pay award. The Leader also indicated that the projected funding gap for 2023/24 was over £35M, and, by way of comparison, the highest annual funding gap during austerity was in the region of £24M, this providing a clear picture on the size of the challenge. The Leader informed Forum Members of the proactive steps the Council is taking to address this</p>

position, including specific measures to reduce in-year expenditure by £1.5M, and urged Forum Members to ensure all possible steps are taken by schools to reduce spend in the current year. The Leader concluded the update by providing Forum Members with the opportunity to send through specific questions which would then be discussed outside of the meeting.

The Chair thanked the Leader for setting out a clear picture of the financial outlook and re-affirmed the commitment of the Council to continue to work in partnership with schools and explore all opportunities to maximise the level of funding provided to the sector.

The Chair then invited the Service Director – Finance and Improvement Services to present the phase 1 2023/24 Budget Consultation agenda item, via the aid of a PowerPoint presentation.

The Service Director provided an overview of the Council's 2022/23 financial position and outlook over the medium term; general approach for 2023/24 (in respect of the phase 1 budget consultation process); 2023/24 Budget Setting – key strategic building blocks; the Council's Priorities; and Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS). The Service Director indicated that the overview of these areas intended to assist Forum Members in formulating their feedback as part of the 2023/24 Budget Consultation process.

Forum Members were requested to provide feedback on the following areas:

Schools Budget

The Service Director – Finance and Improvement Services requested feedback from Forum Members on 'Do you think the Council should provide sufficient resources to fully cover increased pay and non-pay cost pressures in our schools?' and 'Do you think an efficiency saving should be built into the schools budget?'

A Forum Member fed back support for the Council to provide sufficient resources to fully cover increased pay and non-pay cost pressures in schools and with regard to whether an efficiency saving should be built into the school budget, the Forum Member fed back that this is not supported but recognised it was a measure that the Council needs to consider taking into account the very challenging financial outlook. The Forum Member also requested feedback on where school priorities should be, linked to the funding pressures, and sought assurance that there are no areas within the Council that would be protected from the requirement to deliver budget savings.

Another Member supported this feedback and noted that whilst schools recognise and appreciate the Council is doing all it can to support the sector, the funding proposal for schools will mean not all services could continue to be provided or provided at the same level.

The Chair thanked the Forum Members for their feedback and reiterated the unprecedented financial challenges facing the Council, that schools would continue to be prioritised by the Council in the context of the funding available to it and that all Council service areas are being subject to review to identify further budget saving options.

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services fed back that the priorities of the Council and schools are aligned in terms of leadership, high quality teaching and learning, improving the outcomes for all learners including the most disadvantaged and disengaged learners, supporting vulnerable children and the wellbeing of learners and staff. The Director also fed back that the Council and Schools will continue to work closely together, recognising the very challenging operating environment, to ensure the on-going efficient and effective use of resources. The Director added that in terms of Council services, all areas are subject to review and challenge to identify and deliver budget savings, and no services are protected.

Social Care

The Service Director requested feedback from Forum Members on 'Do you think the Council should continue to prioritise social services as a key area for additional investment?'

A Forum Member fed back their support to continue to prioritise social services as a key area for additional investment.

Fees and Charges

The Service Director requested feedback from Forum Members on 'Do you think the requirement for fees and charges to be reviewed individually and the continued need to take into account the impact on service users is a reasonable approach (and not apply an across-the-board increase in line with the 12 month CPI rate (as at Oct 22) of 11.1%?'

Forum Members did not have any specific feedback to provide in respect of fees and charges.

Service levels

The Service Director requested feedback from Forum Members on 'What service areas provided by the Council are important to you?' and 'Do you think the Council should consider changing the level of services for any of these and if so how? For example, reviewing the frequency that services are provided, or opening times, depending how often services are used?'

A Forum Member fed back the important link between Schools and Children's Services, noting the pressures both services are currently under,

and this position should be taken into account as part of the budget setting process.

Another Forum Member fed back that in the context of the support from the Council being very much valued, value for money reviews for specific services should be undertaken to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Another Forum Member agreed with the important link between schools and Children's Services, and the challenging operating environment, and also fed back the importance of leisure services and school swimming provision in supporting life skills and mental health. The Forum Member indicated that Leisure Services should be protected.

Council Tax

The Service Director requested feedback from Forum Members on 'Do you think the Council should increase Council Tax next year by '0% to 3%', 'between 3% and 5%' or '5%+'?' and 'The level of Council Tax versus maintaining or reducing service levels?'

A Forum Member fed back they would look to protect services and increase Council Tax by 3% to 5%, and other Forum Members indicating their support to increase Council Tax by 3% to 5%. Another Forum Member fed back that the Council Tax increase should be as low as possible as an increase would impact dramatically on all households, including middle income householders.

Efficiencies

The Service Director requested feedback from Forum Members on 'Do you support the Council's strategy on efficiencies?', 'Do you think we should continue to expect our managers to deliver more efficient services?' and 'Are there any specific areas where you think the Council could be more efficient / any examples of Council Services not being efficient?'

Three Forum Members fed back that it was difficult to see how the Council could become more efficient and there needed to be realistic expectations in terms of the level of services that could continue to be delivered taking account of the forecasted funding position.

A Forum Member also fed back that efficiency savings will impact on staffing levels which will also impact on the range and level of services that can be delivered.

Another Forum Member fed back that the Council should be reasonable and proportionate in the allocation of budget reductions, taking into account those areas deemed as key priorities.

Council Reserves

The Service Director requested feedback from Forum Members on 'Do you think the Council should continue with its strategy around the management of reserves?'

Two Forum Members supported the purposes for which the Council is holding reserves.

Council Priorities

The Service Director requested feedback from Forum Members on 'Do you think the Council should focus on the five key areas of digitisation, commercialisation, early intervention and prevention, Independence and Efficient and Effective Organisation to maximise resources and deliver improved services?'

Forum Members did not have any specific feedback to provide in respect of Council Priorities.

Council Tax Reduction Scheme

The Service Director requested feedback from Forum Members on the following:

Extended Payments – 'Do you think that 4 weeks is a reasonable period to continue paying Council Tax Reduction when someone returns to work?'

A Forum Member fed back that they felt 4 weeks was sufficient. Another Forum Member fed back that it depended on individual circumstances and noted that the 4 weeks would be beneficial for some households. Another Forum Member requested further information on the position within other local authorities in order to be able to provide more informed feedback.

War disablement – 'Do you think that it is reasonable for the Council to continue to totally exclude War Disablement and War Widow's Pensions income when assessing entitlement to CTR Scheme?'

A Forum Member fed back that all areas need to be looked at, due to the very challenging financial position, and noted that continuing to totally exclude War Disablement and War Widow's Pensions income when assessing entitlement to CTR Scheme would have a positive impact on eligible individuals.

Another Forum Member indicated that further information on the position of other local authorities, as a comparison, would be helpful to inform providing feedback.

Another Forum Member fed back that War Disablement Pensions/War Widow's Pensions income should be totally excluded and felt that the Council needed to look at all areas of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, in light of the differing needs across the County Borough.

Backdating claims – 'Do you think that 6 months is a reasonable period to backdate claims for working age and pensioners?'

Forum Members did not have any specific feedback to provide in respect of Council Priorities.

The Service Director - Finance & Improvement Services concluded by thanking Forum Members for their feedback, noting that this will be collated and included in the information presented to the Council's Cabinet as part of developing a draft Budget Strategy for 2023/24.

The Chair thanked the Service Director and Forum Members for their contributions and reiterated the importance of the valued continued relationship between the Council and Schools.

Item ID	23327
Item Title	ANY OTHER BUSINESS
Summary	None.

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