



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

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

**A hybrid meeting of the CABINET will be held on  
Monday, 27th March, 2023 at 10.30 am**

**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 5pm on the Thursday, 23 March 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](mailto:ExecutiveandRegulatoryBusinessUnit@rctcbc.gov.uk)

**ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

**1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

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

Note:

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

**2. MINUTES**

To receive the minutes of the Cabinet Committee on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023 as an accurate record.

**(Pages 5 - 16)**

**3. CWM TAF MORGANNWG WELL-BEING PLAN 2023-2028**

To receive the report of the Chief Executive, which provides Members with the Public Services Boards 'Cwm Taf Morgannwg Well-Being Plan 2023-2028' as required under the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

**(Pages 17 - 32)**

**4. REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA) AND INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2016 (IPA) - USE OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS DURING 2022 BY RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

To receive the report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services and Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services which enables the Cabinet to review the Council's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (as amended) (RIPA) for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022; the Council's use of the Acquisition of Communications Data under the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA) for the same period; and the proposed amendment to the Corporate Policy and Procedures Document on The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA).

**(Pages 33 - 42)**

**5. ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT 2021-2022**

To receive the report of the Director of Human Resources, which provides information on the Council's Annual Equality Report, for the year 2021/22.

**(Pages 43 - 130)**

**6. UPDATE ON PROPOSALS TO STRENGTHEN THE CONTINUUM OF SCHOOL-BASED PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES (SEBD)**

To receive the report of the Director of Education and Inclusion Services, which updates Cabinet Members on a two-stage pilot to allocate funding to secondary schools to establish school-based alternative curriculum Step 4 provision for learners with significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). The report provides an overview of the impact of the provisions established to date in building the capacity of schools to meet the needs of their learners with SEBD, thus adopting an inclusive approach to strengthening the continuum of SEBD provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council in line with the underpinning ethos of recent Welsh Government Additional Learning Needs legislation and statutory guidance on developing a whole-school approach to supporting wellbeing. The report also seeks Cabinet approval to utilise an existing earmarked reserve to enable schools to continue to implement Step 4 provisions as part of their graduated response to meeting the needs of learners with SEBD.

**(Pages 131 - 154)**

**7. EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES PLANNED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023-2024**

To receive the report of the Director of Education and Inclusion Services, which provides Members with details of the capital works for approval for 2023/24 as part of the Council's three-year Capital Programme, as well as further information relating to an additional Capital Funding Grant awarded by Welsh Government for 2022/23.

**(Pages 155 - 168)**

**8. HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORTATION AND STRATEGIC PROJECTS  
SUPPLEMENTARY CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023-2024**

To receive the report of the Director of Frontline Services, which sets out the detailed capital programme for Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects, following approval of the Council's Three-Year Capital Programme 2023/24 - 2025/26 on 8th March 2023 at Council.

**(Pages 169 - 192)**

**9. COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE REPORT - 31ST DECEMBER 2022  
(QUARTER 3)**

To receive the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services, which provides Members with an overview of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective, based on the first nine-months of this financial year (to the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022).

**(Pages 193 - 226)**

**10. REVIEW OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES**

To receive the report of the Director of Prosperity and Development, which seeks Cabinet approval to refocus some of the current Regeneration grant schemes available to local businesses in order to maximise the funding opportunities available from the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant (WGPG) and UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

**(Pages 227 - 234)**

**11. URGENT BUSINESS**

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



**Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication**

**Circulation:-**

**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  
Andy Wilkins, Director of Legal Services and Democratic Services  
David Powell, Director of Corporate Estates  
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  
Roger Waters, Director – Frontline Services  
Christian Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Paul Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services  
Derek James, Service Director – Prosperity & Development  
Neil Elliott, Interim Director of Social Services

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh.

## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET**

Minutes of the Hybrid meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday, 28 February 2023 at 11.30 am.

This meeting was live streamed, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

### **County Borough Councillors – The following Councillors were present in the Council Chamber:-**

Councillor A Morgan (Chair)

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

### **Non-Committee Members in attendance**

Councillor K Johnson

### **Officers in attendance**

Mr P Mee, Chief Executive  
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services  
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services and Democratic Services  
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates  
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services  
Ms L Davies, Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services  
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources  
Mr R Waters, Director – Frontline Services  
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services  
Mr N Elliott, Interim Director of Social Services  
Ms A Richards, Temporary Service Director - 21st Century Schools and Transformation  
Ms C Williams, Service Manager - Disabled Children  
Mr G Roberts, Integrated Transport Manager

### **Apologies for absence**

Councillor M Norris

### **107 Declaration of Interest**

The Deputy Leader declared the following personal interest in respect of Item 10 of the agenda – Capital Programme: "I am a Member of the Governing Body of Heol y Celyn Primary School which is referenced in the report."

## 108 Minutes

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023.

## 109 Residential Care Homes for Older People

The Interim Director of Social Services presented the report, which provided the Cabinet with the opportunity to consider the outcome of the consultation on the preferred options on the future provision of accommodation for older people in each of the Council's nine residential care homes.

The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication then provided the Cabinet with the feedback of the Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee, which considered the report at its meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2023. A formal letter (*attached*) had been circulated to the Cabinet prior to the meeting but the Service Director took the opportunity to summarise its key points:

- Many members acknowledged the strong public opposition to the Garth Olwg proposal;
- A Majority of members have recognised the case for change;
- Many members have identified the need to see proposals to invest in all facilities come forward as soon as possible;
- A comment was made by one member in respect of the focus of the report upon capacity rather than addressing a better geographical spread, and local access to such facilities;
- A member asked for reassurance that the Council is 'confident' when reducing capacity, there is 'resilience' in the community to support people to live independently longer; and
- A majority of the Committee commented upon the need for greater capacity for dementia as part of the proposals.

The Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care took the opportunity to thank officers for the comprehensive report, which set out for the Council's continued modernisation programme of investment in care homes, despite the current financial position. The Cabinet Member was in support of the proposals that sought to provide dignity and respect in old age with modern, state of the art care homes, including provision for more complex needs and learning disabilities in adulthood. In respect of the extensive public consultation undertaken, the Cabinet Member noted that it was largely positive with residents welcoming the investment. The Cabinet Member spoke of the concerns raised regarding the Garth Olwg proposal and took the opportunity commend Councillor G Stacey for raising a number of issues raised on behalf of residents and staff in retaining the care home at Garth Olwg, whilst welcoming a new facility for adults with learning disabilities.

The Leader emphasised that although the care provided by staff was excellent, several of current homes did not meet the new modern-day standards. The Leader advised that the remodelling of the rooms to include ensembles etc was considered but that it would prove to be challenging with residents needing to be moved more than once, which was strongly condemned by the Older People's Commissioner.

The Deputy Leader thanked the Director for the report and spoke positive of the

change to Ferndale recommendation to increase capacity, following consideration of the consultation responses. The Deputy Leader fully appreciated the anxiety any change creates, but felt it was important to acknowledge that it would not be right by the service or future users, to continue with the status quo, and commented that it was essential through investment, to adapt to the needs and demands of future generations.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure spoke positive of the report and the significant investment to meet the needs of the local communities. The Cabinet Member noted that the consultation was well-received but acknowledged the concerns of residents in respect of the Garth Olwg proposal, which had also been noted by the Scrutiny Committee. However, the Cabinet Member emphasised that the investment would provide alternative accommodation with care to support people with learning disabilities in adulthood.

In respect of the concerns raised from residents in terms of the Garth Olwg proposals, the Leader noted that within 5 miles of Garth Olwg, there were two other Council care homes, private care homes and two extra care facilities. The Leader noted that Garth Olwg was operating at a 50% rate, which wasn't likely to increase and advised that there were vacant beds in the neighbouring facilities. The Leader emphasised that there was a need for capacity and resilience in the system and explained that the proposals would provide a substantial level of surplus capacity, despite the small reductions. The Leader spoke of the Council's current extra-care facilities and Cabinet's visit to the Talbot Green facility, where the feedback was positive.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider:
  - the responses to the consultation on the modernisation of the Council's nine residential care homes for older people;
  - the information provided in this report;
  - the Equality Impact Assessment (including Socio-Economic Duty) and Welsh Language Impact Assessment; and
  - the recommendations and comments of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, following its meeting held on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2023, where the Committee undertook pre-scrutiny of the preferred options on the future provision of the Council's accommodation for older people following the consultation [NOTE: A letter of the Service Director, Democratic Services and Communication was circulated to Cabinet Members prior to the Cabinet meeting and was verbally reported by the Service Director at the meeting].
2. 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 proceed with the preferred option to permanently decommission Ystrad Fechan residential 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 7 of the report. Following a previous Cabinet decision Ystrad Fechan residential care home is currently temporarily closed and has no residents living there.

4. To a further report being presented to Cabinet setting out the investment proposals to provide new accommodation with care provision, including 40 extra care apartments and 20 residential dementia care beds in Treorchy.
5. To proceed with the preferred option to develop land near the existing Ferndale House residential care home to provide new accommodation with care provision, including 25 extra care apartments and 15 residential dementia care beds and decommission Ferndale House residential care home when the new proposed alternative accommodation with care for older people provision is developed, as set out in Section 7 of the report. NOTE: This is an amendment to the preferred option consulted upon which was to provide new accommodation with care with 20 extra care apartments and 10 residential dementia care beds and would increase the care provision in the Rhondda Fach.
6. To a further report being presented to Cabinet setting out the investment proposal to provide new accommodation with care provision, including 25 extra care apartments and 15 residential dementia care beds in Ferndale.
7. To proceed with the preferred option to work with Linc Cymru to explore options to develop land near the existing Troedyrhiw residential 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 7 of the report.
8. To a further report being presented to Cabinet setting out the investment proposal to provide new accommodation with care provision, including 25 extra care apartments and 15 residential dementia care beds in Mountain Ash.
9. To proceed with the preferred option to redevelop Garth Olwg residential 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, as set out in Section 7 of the report.
10. That the decommissioning of Garth Olwg residential care home be concluded by the end of May 2023 and will follow the good practice principles detailed below in paragraph 7.7 of the report and ensure comprehensive support is provided to residents, their families, and staff.



11. To a further report being presented to Cabinet setting out the investment proposal to provide alternative accommodation with care to support people with learning disabilities in adulthood on the Garth Olwg residential care home site.
12. That the Interim Director of Social Services and Director of Human Resources produce a workforce development plan to address the workforce issues raised by staff during the consultation in order to attract, retain and support the development of a stable, talented, and committed workforce to support the delivery of Council's residential care service. The workforce development plan would be shared with the recognised Trade Unions for views prior to any implementation.

## **110 Children's Services Residential Transformation Strategy**

The Service Director of Children's Services provided the Cabinet with information about children's services plans for developing residential care services in line with the Council's duties, and in the context of the Welsh Government Policy ambition to remove profit from the provision of care for looked after young people; and sought Cabinet's agreement to approve and adopt the proposed Looked After Children: Residential Care Transformation Strategy 2022-2027.

The Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care took the opportunity to thank officers for the detailed report, which he felt set out a pathway to delivering change and direction to children's residential services. The Cabinet Member was fully supportive of a not-for-profit market and stressed that the overriding aim was to provide care to looked after children and young people, close to home in high quality settings where they can thrive by stable, resilient, and skilful staff. The Cabinet Member recognised that it was an ambitious task with significant barriers to overcome to comply with regulations by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2027 and as Chair of Corporate Parenting Board, the Cabinet Member stated that Board Members were acutely aware of the increase in demand for placements, lack of availability and sufficiency and that for many years there had been children placed out of county.

The Cabinet Member questioned whether the decision had impacted on residential placement availability for children over the last year and whether it had increased the number of OWR placements supported by Children's Services over the period in Rhondda Cynon Taf and other Local Authorities. The Service Director confirmed that the reason the Council had to develop OWR placements was due to the lack of suitable registered alternative and explained that the proposed strategy was the strongest plan to move away from those arrangements.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure commented that the Council did not want to be placing children in unregistered accommodation, but like many other Local Authorities, there was no other alternative due to a lack of suitable accommodation availability. The Cabinet Member sought assurance that the unregistered placements provide a safe environment with care and support that is tailored to the specific needs of the individual children while registered accommodation is pursued. The Service Director explained that all options are considered prior to an OWR placement, which included supporting the young people at their existing homes to prevent escalation; and developing therapeutic provision and placement support. Additionally, it was explained that RCT's own

resources were considered before an OWR placement but where there was no alternative option, the young people's safety and wellbeing was paramount. The Service Director assured Members that managerial oversight is provided as it would in an RCT children's home.

The Deputy Leader thanked the Scrutiny Committee for its contribution and stated that in order to support young people in local communities it was key that Local Members are provided with concise and factual information to prevent speculation and negate any concerns of the community.

In light of the Deputy Leader's comment, the Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care proposed an additional recommendation that Elected Member briefing sessions were to be taken forward to provide Councillors with the opportunity to find out more in terms of the ambition of the Strategy, the duties to looked after young people and to support Elected Members in responding to any queries from constituents

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the information contained within the report;
2. To note the comments and observations of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee, following pre-scrutiny of the proposed Strategy on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022;
3. To adopt the Looked After Children: Residential Care Transformation Strategy 2022-2027; and
4. That Member briefing sessions are taken forward to provide Councillors with the opportunity to find out more about the ambition of the Strategy, the duties to looked after young people and to support Elected Members in responding to any queries from constituents.

## **111 Cabinet Work Programme**

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

The Service Director informed Members that there had been several changes made to the Work Programme following its publication, which would be reflected on the Council's website. The Service Director also advised that there would be an additional Cabinet meeting in April to ensure all necessary business is considered during the remainder of the Municipal Year.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

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

## **112 Free Bus Travel throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf for March 2023**

The Director of Frontline Services presented the report, which sought Cabinet approval to provide free bus travel for the period of 1st – 31st March 2023 for all journeys that start and terminate within the Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) county boundary. The Director explained that the Council had been successful in bidding for money through the UK's Shared Prosperity Fund to introduce initiatives that will help reduce the cost of living for residents, through measures

that improve energy efficiency and combat fuel poverty and climate change. As such, £500k had been awarded for the 2022/23 financial year, with further awards of £1.1M for 2023/24 and £1.2M for 2024/25.

The Director clarified that, if approved, free bus travel would apply to all operators currently operating a scheduled service, for journeys within the County Borough. If a journey ends outside of RCT, that part would remain payable.

The Leader advised that the average fare for bus journeys across RCT was £2.30 and explained that the initial model considered by officers was a £2 flat rate across the whole year, totalling over £2M, which was unaffordable. The Leader continued and explained that, had they opted for the £2 flat rate model for a month, much of the funding would have been returned to the Government.

The Leader spoke of another Local Authority, which had trialled a period of free bus travel and informed Members that bus travel had increased by around 30% and although there was no long-term evidence of a substantial uplift, the key was to increase the number of passengers going forward. The Leader stated that an increase in bus travel would not only support the Council with its climate commitments but would save residents in RCT approximately £500K on travel for the month.

The Leader informed Members that following the month of March, a review would be undertaken of the pilot to gain an understanding of how best to use the additional funding of £1.2M in the new financial year.

With the agreement of the Leader, County Borough Councillor K Johnson addressed the Cabinet on this item.

The Leader thanked the Member for his contribution and explained that in terms of Bus Emergency Scheme, the Welsh Government had set out a three-month extension that could be extended further. The Leader added that subject to the budget announcement on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023, Local Government would be pressing UK Government for continued funding for the bus emergency scheme and acknowledged that with price increases in fuel etc, there had been an impact on bus travel.

The Deputy Leader and the Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure voiced their support of the proposal. The Deputy Leader spoke on behalf of residents who were reliant on public transport and feeling the repercussions of the cost-of-living crisis; and stated that free bus travel throughout RCT for March would be of great financial benefit.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report and approve the proposal to introduce free bus travel for the period of 1st – 31st March 2023 for all journeys that start and terminate within the county boundary; and
2. That Officers review the outcomes of the free bus scheme, and seek to develop further free bus travel initiatives during the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years e.g., during December 2023; subject to funding.

**113 Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme - Naming of Three New Schools in the Greater Pontypridd Area**

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to defer consideration of this item to a future meeting.

#### **114 Non-Domestic Rate (NDR) Relief Schemes & Revaluation Update**

The Head of the Revenue and Benefits Service presented the report, which provided the Cabinet with:

- a) Details of the Welsh Government Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) – Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief (RLH) Scheme for 2023/24;
- b) Details of a proposed local business rate reduction scheme; and
- c) Details of the NDR Revaluation which comes into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services was pleased to note that Welsh Government had recognised the financial challenges facing businesses in Wales and welcomed the increase in level of relief to 75% across Retail, Leisure, and Hospitality sectors. The Cabinet Member was also pleased to note that the Council's local scheme would also be increased from £300 to £500 per qualifying business premises and noted that over 600 businesses would benefit in the coming year. The Cabinet Member concluded and noted that the Transitional Relief Scheme, coupled with the freezing of the multiplier at 53.5p would protect businesses from the impact of the Non-Domestic Rate Revaluation exercise.

The Leader added that increasing the local relief scheme from £300 to £500 was a commitment of the administration to provide over and above the Welsh Government's schemes.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the details of the WG RLH Scheme and formally adopt the scheme for the year 2023/24;
2. The proposed local Business Rate Reduction Scheme for 2023/24; and
3. To note the details of the NDR revaluation exercise.

**Note: Following consideration of this item, the Leader left the meeting, and the Deputy Leader took the Chair.**

#### **115 The Council's 2023-2024 Revenue Budget**

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Digital Services provided the Cabinet with the draft budget strategy for consideration which they would wish to recommend to Council.

The Deputy Leader took the opportunity to thank the officers for addressing the budget approach in a sustainable way, particularly in terms of the use of transitional funding. The Deputy Leader acknowledged the continued pressure in respect of social care and proposed that the Cabinet amend the proposed strategy to take forward a Council Tax increase of 3.90%. The Deputy Leader was of the view that the marginal increase would still see RCT Council Tax lower than many other Local Authorities and would look to offset some of the pressures placed in the area.

The Deputy Leader noted that the report highlighted savings from procurement, technology, back office, and efficiency savings; and that compulsory job losses had been prevented. The Deputy commented that the opportunities to make

savings away from the frontline were becoming increasing limited.

In light of the Deputy Leader's comments, the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services moved the recommendations outlined within the report and proposed the additional recommendation, to amend the proposed Council Tax increase for 2023/24 to 3.90%, and to determine that this level forms part of the Cabinet Budget Strategy to be presented to Council on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To review and amend the Budget Strategy which they wish to recommend to Council on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023;
2. To amend the proposed Council Tax increase for 2023/24 to 3.90% to support social care pressures, and to determine that this level forms part of the Cabinet Budget Strategy to be presented to Council on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023; and
3. To recommend to Council that the Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services be authorised to amend the final budget consequential to the receipt of the Final Settlement as set out in Section 4 of the report.

## 116 Capital Programme

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Digital Services provided Cabinet with a proposed three-year capital programme for 2023/24 to 2025/26 that if acceptable, will be presented to Council for approval.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services took the opportunity to thank the Director for the report and was pleased to note that, despite the challenging financial circumstances, the Capital Programme continued to achieve one of the largest level of capital investment by a Local Authority in Wales. The Cabinet Member stated that the investments support the delivery of visible differences to communities and improve communities across RCT as a result.

The Deputy Leader echoed the Cabinet Member's comments and was pleased to note the ambitious programme of investment, despite the current financial climate.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To review and propose the attached three-year capital programme to Council on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023 which includes:
  - A proposed allocation of new resources as detailed in paragraph 5 of the report;
  - Proposed investment priorities as detailed in paragraph 6.2 of the report;
  - The Council's core capital programme; and
  - The Council's total capital programme including additional non core funding.
2. To authorise the Deputy Chief Executive & Group Director – Finance, Digital & Frontline Services to amend the level of Council Resources required to fund the Core Three Year Capital Programme as shown at Appendix 2 as a consequence of any change to the Council's capital resource levels announced in the Final Local Government Settlement.

**This meeting closed at 12:45pm**

**Councillor A Morgan (Chair)  
Councillor M Webber (Deputy Chair)**

Feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee

RE: Residential Care Homes for Older People

I have been instructed by this Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee to convey the comments and observations of Members in relation to Residential Care Homes for Older People report, which was considered at its meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

Present:

County Borough Councillors J Edwards (Chair), J Brencher (Vice-Chair), M Ashford, J Bonetto, Sheryl Evans, G Hughes, C Middle, K Morgan, S Morgans, W Owen, G Warren, K Webb, G E Williams

Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care, County Borough Councillor G Caple

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Sera Evans.

The following points were raised:

- Many members acknowledged the strong public opposition to the Garth Olwg proposal raising concerns about losing a facility in a growth area with over 50% disagreeing with the proposal
- A Majority of members have recognised the case for change, identifying the need for homes that are fit for purpose in the future and also recognising residents' preference to be cared for in their own homes with support wrapped around them.
- Many members have identified the need to see proposals to invest in all facilities come forward as soon as possible to improve the offer to residents with dedicated teams in place to manage the proposed changes.
- A comment was made by one member in respect of the focus of the report upon capacity rather than addressing a better geographical spread, and local access to such facilities as public transport, to ensure that residents needs and want to stay close to family is recognised.
- A member asked for reassurance that we are 'confident' when reducing capacity, there is 'resilience' in the community to support people to live independently longer and being mindful of the public perception around closing care homes when there is much discussion around 'bed blocking' and patient flow.
- A majority commented upon the need for greater capacity for dementia as part of the proposals and for this care to be local to those in need.
- And plans for staff recruitment and retention to support the delivery of the proposals and for this to be offered in a different way in order to attract people into the caring profession as a career.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christian Hanagan', written over a faint, dotted grid background.

**Christian Hanagan**

**Service Director - Democratic Services and Communication**



## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CABINET

27<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023

### CWM TAF MORGANNWG WELL-BEING PLAN 2023-2028

#### REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR A MORGAN OBE.

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

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with the Public Services Boards 'Cwm Taf Morgannwg Well-Being Plan 2023-2028' as required under the Well being of Future Generations Act.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note and approve the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Well-Being Plan as outlined within Appendix A of this report.
- 2.2 Recommend the adoption of the Plan to Full Council at its meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2023.

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

- 3.1 As a statutory partner to the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Service Board, the Well-Being Plan is also subject to approval through the governance arrangements with the individual statutory partners of the Public Services Board: Merthyr Tydfil CBC, Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC, Bridgend Council, Natural Resources Wales, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board and South Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 In line with the Well-Being of Future Generations Act the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board is required to prepare and publish a Local Well-being Plan, which sets out the local well-being objectives and the steps it proposes to take to meet them.
- 4.2 Each PSB must improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of its area by working to achieve the well-being goals. It will do this by:

- Assessing the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in its area; and
- Setting objectives that are designed to maximise the PSBs contribution to the wellbeing goals.

They must do this in accordance with the sustainable development principle.

- 4.3 The PSB is required to prepare and publish a Local Well-being Plan every 5 years, which sets out the local well-being objectives and the steps it proposes to take to meet them. These must be designed to maximise the Board's contribution to delivering the well-being goals within its area; and take all reasonable steps to meet those objectives, in line with the 5 ways of working, set out in the Act, Long Term, Prevention, Integration, Collaboration, and Involvement. This will be the second iteration of the Well-being Plan for Cwm Taf, and the first iteration for the new Cwm Taf Morgannwg PSB, to be established in April.

## **5. CWM TAF MORGANNWG PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD DRAFT WELL BEING PLAN**

- 5.1 The PSB have used the Well-being Assessment as the evidence base for the draft Well-being Plan, the data and information gathered has been used alongside what local communities and people have advised about life in Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Bridgend through ongoing engagement with members of the public, and community groups. (Well-being Assessment)
- 5.2 The Well-being assessment identified inequalities across the communities and the draft plan sets out how the PSB will work together to reduce these inequalities to improve the well-being for people living in the region now and for building towards a fair future. The overarching theme of the draft Well-being Plan is 'A More Equal Cwm Taf Morgannwg', which will drive every aspect of the Public Services Board's work.
- 5.3 The plan proposes two main objectives:
- Objective One - Healthy local neighbourhoods
  - Objective Two – Sustainable and resilient local neighbourhoods

The Well-Being Plan is attached as appendix A to this report.

## **6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required as the contents of the report are for information purposes only. However, the draft Well-Being

Plan looks to improve equity of provision for all people living and working within the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

7.1 The draft Well-Being plan is drafted using the Well-Being Assessment data and ongoing engagement with members of the public and community groups. The plan was also open to a 12 week statutory public consultation from the 18<sup>th</sup> November to the 10<sup>th</sup> February.

7.2 The draft Well Being Plan was pre-scrutinised by the Cwm Taf Public Service Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the [20<sup>th</sup> January 2023](#).

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

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

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

9.1 The report has been prepared in accordance with the duties placed on the PSB under the Well Being of Future Generations Act

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

10.1 The Plan encompasses all of the Council's corporate plan priorities as well as the duties and goals of the Well Being of Future Generations Act.

- A public body must take account of the importance of involving other persons with an interest in achieving the well-being goals and ensure those persons reflect the diversity of the population;
- Effective involvement of people and communities in decisions that affect them is at the heart of improving well-being currently and in the future; and,
- It is vital to factor people's needs; ensuring engagement is meaningful and effective.

## **11 CONCLUSION**

11.1 Each of the PSB's statutory bodies needs to approve the Well Being plan going forward.

11.2 The Well-being Plan has been developed with extensive involvement and engagement of communities and partners across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg footprint informed by the Well-being Assessment.

**Other Information:-**

***Relevant Scrutiny Committee*** – Cwm Taf PSB Joint 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**

**27<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2023**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE  
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR A MORGAN OBE**

**CWM TAF WELL-BEING PLAN 2023-2028**

**Background Papers**

None.

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## OUR WELL-BEING PLAN

A More Equal  
Cwm Taf Morgannwg



2023 | 2028



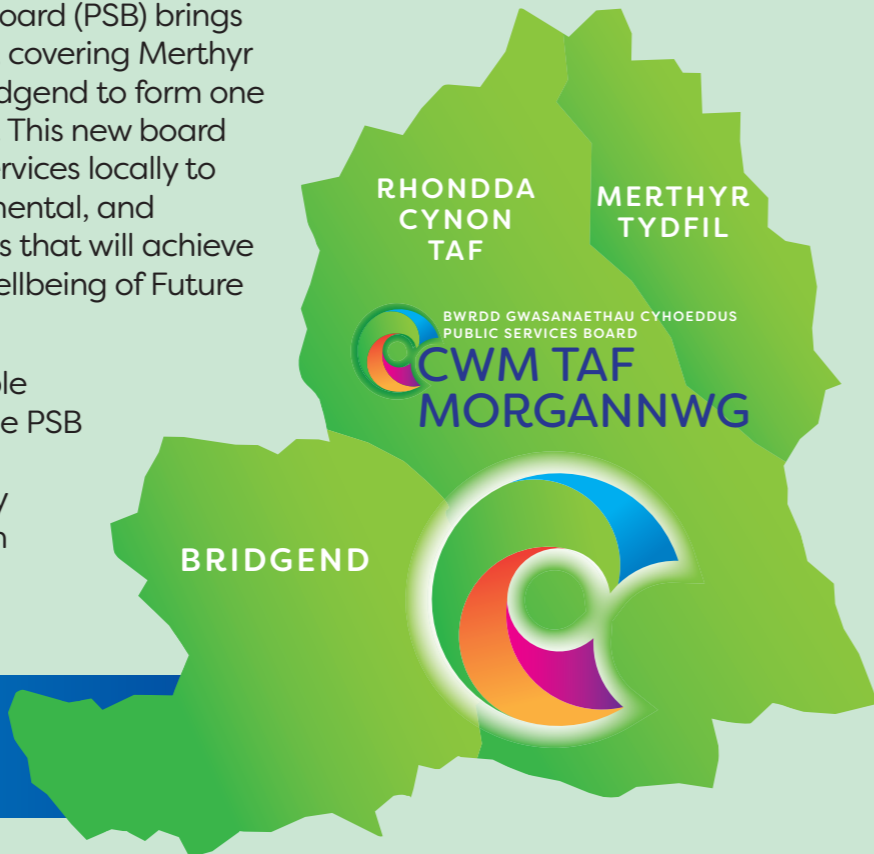
## OUR WELL-BEING PLAN

A More Equal Cwm Taf Morgannwg



Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board (PSB) brings together the previous PSBs in Cwm Taf, covering Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf, and Bridgend to form one PSB for the Cwm Taf Morgannwg area. This new board comprises public bodies, who deliver services locally to improve the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being by setting objectives that will achieve the Well-being Goals outlined in the Wellbeing of Future Generations 2015 Wales Act.

We must do this by using the sustainable development principle which means the PSB needs to make sure that when making decisions they consider the impact they could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future.



We use the following five ways of working from the Act to help us to do this:

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LONG TERM



PREVENTION



INTEGRATION



COLLABORATION



INVOLVEMENT

## OUR WELL-BEING PLAN

A More Equal Cwm Taf Morgannwg



Over 450,000 people live in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Area. Well-being is about quality of life, and how that is connected to the environment, the economy, the services we need and the culture we share. Many things have shaped our communities and our well-being—such as industrial heritage, the landscape and shared interests in sport and the arts, giving a rich history and future opportunity. These can be considered as social, economic, environmental, and cultural factors.

Our **Well-being Assessment** provides the evidence base for this Well-being Plan, the data and information gathered has been used alongside what local communities and people have told us about life in Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil, and Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The overarching theme of our Well-being Plan is **‘A More Equal Cwm Taf Morgannwg’** and that drives every aspect of the Public Services Board’s work.

Our Well-being Assessment told us that the communities in Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf have a lot to be proud about. However, not all communities have fair access to opportunities and face different challenges that impact on well-being. We have learned from our Well-being Assessment to identify how we will work together locally to tackle these inequalities in relation to our lifestyles, our communities, and our environment to improve the well-being for people living here now and building towards a fair future.

This draft plan sets out how we will work together to achieve this.





## How we developed the Plan

To develop our Well-being Plan we used findings from the Well-being Assessment, messages from the engagement and consultation, worked with PSBs and their wider networks and stakeholders at a series of workshops to develop the objectives and draft plan, benefited from support and formal feedback from the Future Generations Commissioner and reflected on our own experience of delivering the previous Well-being Plans.

The Well-being Assessment was a real collaboration of PSB members, partners, and stakeholders from across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg area and wider to bring together data and information to provide a picture of the state of well-being in the area. There was a Community Assessment Action Group that steered the work, with engagement and data sub-groups that included specialists from across our partner agencies and partnerships. The published Assessment and a series of summary sheets are available [here](#).

A report on our engagement and consultation as part of the Well-being Assessment, published [here](#), shows the wide range of conversations

about well-being with diverse communities. We worked with the Regional Partnership Board that helped facilitate conversations and acted as a critical friend to ensure the outcomes were utilised. We met people in their own spaces, in community centres, in town centres, shops and bus stations. Through the Hackathons we used music, poetry, drama, and art as a way of drawing out and reflecting on experiences.

The Our Futures Festival workshop reflected on the findings of the Well-being Assessment and considered where the PSB can make the most difference. Our Stakeholder Conference reflected on our past performance and ways of working. The Three horizons workshop led by Natural Resources Wales helped us to picture the future we want and how the PSB can work together to get there. We have considered how the Objectives of the Well-being Plan relate to the plans of our partners and partnerships to see how shared outcomes can help us to integrate better.

## Future Voices

Throughout the Well-being Assessment and the development of the Well-being Plan we have committed to improving our engagement and making co-production part of our culture. In the development of this Well-being Plan we built on the earlier engagement for the Assessment, going back to those groups, networks, and places to check that the Well-being Objectives and our analysis was right. Through this process we have been supported by the Co-production Network for Wales and will work with them through the life of the plan to develop our approach and skills to make sure community voices really shape and influence the way we work.

To underpin the delivery of our plan we will be focusing on developing our understanding of how local neighbourhoods work and how the environment and climate change impacts on well-being. Our Assessment tells us this will not be the same for everyone so we will develop how

we work with different population groups to see where there is inequality.

We will bring together a network of engagement across our partners and partnerships to improve collaboration and share good practice to support delivery of this plan.

We will build on our work through the previous plans and have a long running programme through the life of this Plan to bring in the voice of our future generations – local children and young people, to make sure they act as our conscience so that we have the courage and ambition for our work to secure the future they want.

Our assessment recognised the rich local culture of our area. We will maximise our opportunities such as the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol and other festivals and events to celebrate our Welsh language and the culture, language, and customs of our diverse communities.

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## Working Differently

The PSB membership, partnerships and networks bring together a wide range of organisations and groups. In working together on our objectives in this Well-being Plan, each will be able to make a different contribution. In all our activities we are guided by the ways of working in the Well-being of Future Generations Act

Specifically, for the achievement of the plan, PSB partners make the following commitments



Involvement and citizen voice will shape the design and delivery of the plan. We will maximise opportunities for working in a more inclusive and co-productive way by working with Co-production Network for Wales.



PSB organisations are rooted in their communities. Through their size and reach, they can contribute to our local area in many ways beyond delivering services. We will maximise our contribution to improving well-being through using our assets to support communities through procurement, reducing our carbon footprint and as big employers of local people.



Establishing a regional governance at the PSB that drives local delivery (based on need and improving equity) and campaigns at a national level on behalf of our communities.

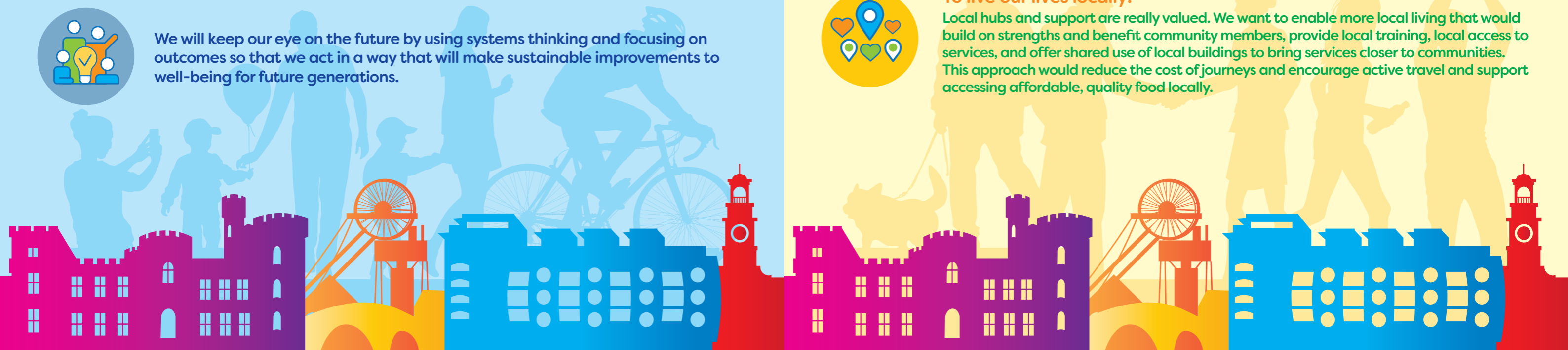


Improving intelligence across the region, agencies, and partnerships so that we recognise and build on the many strengths of the area and understand the causes behind the challenges we face.



We will keep our eye on the future by using systems thinking and focusing on outcomes so that we act in a way that will make sustainable improvements to well-being for future generations.

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## Objective One

### Healthy local neighbourhoods

A Cwm Taf Morgannwg where our communities are inclusive and feel cohesive and people feel safe, supported, and valued. Our Well-being Assessment told us that we want:



#### To feel Connected:

During lockdown our local communities came together with voluntary organisations and partners to make sure that everyone had the support they needed. We are proud of our culture and heritage and our strong local communities, but we know that loneliness can affect anyone, and young people said they felt disconnected. We know that taking part in our community is good for our mental health, and there are great local activities and opportunities but some people, including those with disabilities, feel excluded and cost and transport can be a barrier.



#### Healthy places:

There are great opportunities to keep fit and healthy in our community, but physical activity rates are low, we have high levels of diabetes and obesity, and people in more deprived neighbourhoods are less likely to make use of the green and blue spaces around us. Having safe local spaces and affordable opportunities to be active is important, including play for children and young people. Having access to healthy food locally is also important.



#### To feel and be safe:

Cwm Taf Morgannwg is a safe place to live with good work being done to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour, but we know that some people feel unsafe in some spaces or at certain times. Recent figures also show an increase in reports of hate crime and domestic abuse. We recognise the impact this can have and want to create communities where everyone feels safe and has a sense of belonging.



#### To live our lives locally:

Local hubs and support are really valued. We want to enable more local living that would build on strengths and benefit community members, provide local training, local access to services, and offer shared use of local buildings to bring services closer to communities. This approach would reduce the cost of journeys and encourage active travel and support accessing affordable, quality food locally.

**By working together on this objective, we will:**



**Support communities to be inclusive so that:**

- more people say they feel connected;
- fewer people say they feel lonely; and
- there is a range of community activities for everyone in the language of their choice.



**Promote healthier lifestyles in our communities so that:**

- more people are active;
- fewer people, particularly children, are obese; and
- there are more opportunities to be active locally and affordably.



**Work with communities to build a sense of belonging so that:**

- more people report feeling safe in their local area;
- fewer people experience anti-social behaviour; and
- there are opportunities to act together to tackle problems when they occur



**Help people to access to support, services and opportunities in their local neighbourhood so that:**

- more people use active travel;
- fewer people face long / costly journeys to access services; and
- there are community buildings for everyone to access and use.

We believe working in this way will also positively contribute to the seven national Well-being goals:

<b>A prosperous Wales</b>	Reducing the reliance on costly transport to live locally and having access to low cost or no cost opportunities to come together in the local area. Supporting our town centres
<b>A resilient Wales</b>	Reducing our carbon footprint by being able to access the services we need by walking or using active travel.
<b>A healthier Wales</b>	By promoting healthier lifestyles and enabling access to local opportunities to be active and come together.
<b>A more equal Wales</b>	By understanding the barriers that some people face in feeling connected to their communities
<b>A Wales of cohesive communities</b>	Helping everyone feel safe in their local area by acting on substance misuse and domestic violence
<b>A Wales of vibrant culture thriving Welsh Language</b>	By enabling everyone to have access to a range of activities and opportunities to take part in our rich local culture of sports, music, arts and language.
<b>A globally responsible Wales</b>	By working to make sure that everyone who comes to the area has a warm welcome and the support they need.

**Who can help Us? – Our key links for delivery**

- Regional Community Cohesion Officers and community cohesion networks including Black Asian and Minority Ethnic and LGBTQI+
- Community Safety Partnership, Area Planning Board for Substance Misuse, Regional Safeguarding Board and engagement networks and groups
- VAWDASV Steering Group (violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence)
- Public Health Wales Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales Programme
- Regional Partnership Board
- RIC (Regional Innovation Communication) Hub Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board
- Regional Social Prescribing Steering Group
- Play sufficiency groups and sports development teams
- Local Development Plans
- Workforce well-being
- Local Authority Elected Members and Town and Community Councillors
- Community hubs, organisations, and neighbourhood networks



## Objective Two

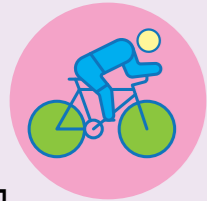
### Sustainable and resilient local neighbourhoods

A Cwm Taf Morgannwg where we understand and respond to the risk of climate change to our communities. To do this we must value, manage and enjoy our green and blue spaces responsibly. Our Well-being Assessment told us that we want:



#### To protect and enjoy our natural green and blue spaces responsibly:

We love green and blue spaces around us but we could be managing and using them better for a wide range of benefits such as climate adaption, physical exercise, coming together or just being outside. When we do use them, and in all the things we do and the decisions we make, we want to make sure that we're not doing anything that could negatively impact on the spaces around us. We need a healthy ecosystem for water and food however many of our local species of plants, animals and insects are in decline.



#### To increase opportunities for active travel and using public transport:

We find that travelling for work, shopping, appointments, and socialising can be costly and difficult without a car. Where more of the services, businesses, and activities we use are in our local neighbourhoods, we can use active travel like walking and cycling to get to them which can improve our health and reduce the number of journeys that rely on vehicles.



#### To reduce carbon use and waste:

At present, we are using our resources in an unsustainable way, and this is contributing to the climate and nature emergencies. We already have good rates of recycling but there is more we must do to reduce the amount of waste we produce. There are good examples of how we are reducing carbon and we must all support plans to become carbon neutral. We all have a role to play in global climate mitigation: reducing our consumption and waste and energy use to create a cleaner, greener Cwm Taf Morgannwg.



#### To tackle Climate Change and its impact:

We are already seeing the impact of Climate Change in our communities. Many residents have experienced devastating flooding and we are also seeing rising temperatures in the summer. Wales has declared both Climate and Nature emergencies and we know that extreme weather has greater impact in areas with a lower income. Climate adaptation is needed to make our most vulnerable communities resilient. We must change how we use and manage our urban and natural spaces to help us respond to climate change and the risks it poses.

By working together on this objective, we will:



#### Improve, use, enjoy and protect our natural local spaces so that we see:

- more local, accessible green and blue spaces;
- fewer incidents of pollution and fly tipping; and
- more resilient, healthier ecosystems and natural environment in our local area, including our rivers and hillsides.



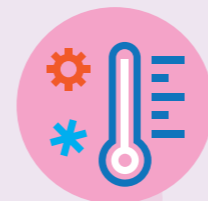
#### Support communities by increasing opportunities for more active travel in their daily lives so that we see:

- more of the things we need and use being nearby;
- fewer journeys being undertaken by car; and
- an improvement in air quality and health.



#### Understand how we can all use resources more sustainably so that we see:

- more re-use and recycling of a range of materials;
- reduced energy consumption; and
- improved management of our land and coastline to reduce carbon emissions and increase carbon capture.



#### Work with communities identify opportunities for Climate Change mitigation and adaptation and understand potential risks from climate change so that we see:

- more awareness, knowledge and skills across communities;
- fewer people, communities, and properties at risk; and
- increased confidence in our ability to respond to future challenges



We believe working in this way will also positively contribute to the seven national Well-being goals:

<b>A prosperous Wales</b>	Reducing negative impacts on our local spaces to create a healthy eco-system
<b>A resilient Wales</b>	By understanding how we can use resources more sustainably
<b>A healthier Wales</b>	Promoting use of green and blue spaces for physical activity and active travel for healthier lifestyles
<b>A more equal Wales</b>	By recognising the limitations on some communities and improving accessibility, knowledge, and skills
<b>A Wales of cohesive communities</b>	By improving awareness, knowledge, and skills across communities in terms of climate change and active travel options
<b>A Wales of vibrant culture thriving Welsh Language</b>	By improving accessibility to green and blue heritage spaces
<b>A globally responsible Wales</b>	Making a change across communities to use what we have responsibly

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**Who can help Us? – Our key links for delivery**

- RCT Climate Action Network
- VAMT green spaces network
- RCT Neighbourhood networks
- Biodiversity Action Plans
- Bridgend Green Network
- City Deal partners
- A local climate change risk assessment
- Cwm Taf Nature Network
- Public Health Wales Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales
- Play sufficiency groups and sports development teams
- Economic Partnerships
- Valleys Regional Park
- Transport for Wales

**How will we deliver the plan?**

We will make sure the priorities and steps in our Wellbeing Plan are delivered through:

- Strong leadership – PSB will collectively lead the delivery of this plan, with a nominated lead for each of the priorities. The new regional PSB for the Cwm Taf Morgannwg area will give a refreshed drive for improving well-being in our communities and also influencing at regional and national level.
- Good governance – delivery will be coordinated through a small core delivery structure led by PSB members that will provide regular reports on progress.
- Accountability – A new regional PSB scrutiny committee, including elected members, will provide democratic accountability through reviewing progress on delivery of the well-being plan and providing advice and support to the PSB.
- Joint resources – Different partners are able to bring different contributions to delivery of the well-being plan. This will include aligning resources across PSB members and making best use of partnership and external funding sources, either directly or through partners.
- Delivery plans that will be developed for each priority and will include targets, responsibilities, timescales and measures for progress.
- Collective commitment to delivering the plan – The wellbeing objectives, priorities and steps in this plan will be reflected in the individual corporate and business plans of PSB members and link to the priorities of key strategic partnerships.
- Community and stakeholder involvement – for each objective our plan highlights how we will work with different stakeholders at a community level. Community and stakeholder involvement will be embedded in all our steps and action plans.
- Links to key strategic partnerships – through having common outcomes and working jointly through existing mechanisms to avoid duplication and add value to joint work on improving well-being in our communities
- Sharing intelligence – building our common understanding of well-being in our area by sharing information and working together to analyse what this means for our future communities.



### How our objectives link together

- Using our green and blue spaces and having a healthy local ecosystem enables us to live healthy lives in our local communities and make healthy lifestyle choices
- Using active travel helps us to be more physically active and have closer day to day contact with other people in our communities.
- Coming together to enjoy our natural spaces helps us to feel more connected and secure in our communities.
- By responding to the challenges of climate change we can prevent damaging impacts on our health and come together as communities to be more resilient to future challenges.
- Thinking more widely about how we use our community assets will help us to reduce our carbon footprint.

### How will we know if we are successful?

We have chosen a small number of quality-of-life outcomes for each of our Well-being Objectives. We will use qualitative and quantitative information to evidence our impact on these well-being outcomes in our area. Our delivery plans will include specific steps, outputs, outcomes, and time-bound performance measures that we will use to evaluate progress.

At the end of each year, we will publish an annual report.

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### A Reflection of our Public Services Board Journey

#### Collaboration:

**Collaborative working enables the growth of networks and knowledge. It has allowed us to reach more diverse groups that help to inform our plans and assessments. It is also through collaborative working that we have learned new methods for engagement and communication. Some examples of this are:**

- We have been able to share expertise, learning and collaborate through working with the Regional Partnership Board and supported by the Community Action Group in the development of the Well-being Assessment and Population Needs Assessment.
- Bringing in wider partners, such as Lloyds Bank Foundation who are working in Merthyr Tydfil to build positive relationships with residents, service commissioners, third sector, charities, private sector, and community groups. This work will focus on children and young people’s mental health.
- Working across our partner networks and partnerships such a Community Safety Partnership, Area Planning Board for Substance Misuse and and VAWDASV (Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence) Steering Group has given a better understanding of well-being such as the white ribbon campaign against domestic violence, providing advice and support on keeping safe and providing training such as the far-right extremism training through the regional community cohesion officer
- Sharing resources such as the nature and well-being web pages where links to partners opportunities and materials help everyone enjoy using our natural spaces and learn more about nature.



### Integration:

As we come together as a regional Public Services Board integration is critical to the way we work going forward as it helps to ensure we increase productivity and reduce duplication. As shown in the annual reports linked above, we have worked with many partners on approaches and plans with successful outcomes:

- Working together to understand shared challenges such as the project with CLES on procurement to see where we spend our money and how more of that can be with local businesses.
- Having a common commitment, such as working towards the real living wage brings organisations together as employers
- Being together to share thoughts and ideas in our series of workshops at the Waterton Centre, Orbit Centre Merthyr Tydfil, Fire Service Headquarters and Bridgend College for the Our Futures Festival
- We have a good foundation through our networks and sub boards such as the Assets Sub Board and Workforce Well-being Sub boards in Bridgend.
- Benefiting from learning from other areas such as Project Dewi with the Co-production network for Wales where we are sharing experiences and ideas across a number of PSBs who want to build in co-production into their culture whilst working as regional PSBs

### Involvement:

Our commitment to improve how we involve our communities in our work will continue because we know the importance of hearing the voices of local communities and service users. We have benefited from the skills of our partners to guide and lead on some of the involvement activity as they provide a new perspective and understanding of our diverse communities and a wider network of connections.

Some examples of involvement are:

- We have had young people design and lead their own engagement through the mind our futures – snakes and ladders project which has focused on the mental health impact from lockdown.
- Using different forms of media in the Hackathons with the Regional Partnership Board where service users and providers came together using craft, song, spoken word, drama, poetry, and illustrations to bring out what is important to their well-being.
- Making sure we have less heard voices by working with people who use mental health services, adults with a learning disability, carers, veterans, victims of domestic violence, drug users, and children and young people.
- Having conversations with people where they are – town centres, community halls, shops, life centres, bus stations, parks, Viva fest with people with a learning disability, college canteens, community hubs

### Long term:

Partners are increasingly aware through policy development and collaborative approaches to tackling some of our sustained challenges that long term thinking is vital in the planning and delivery of services and the conversations we have with our communities. This has been developed over the life of the first plan, and here are some examples of how we have adopted long-term thinking in our work:

- Carrying out a 'Three Horizons' session with Natural Resources Wales to consider the Cwm Taf Morgannwg of safe, resilient, healthy communities that meet the challenges of life in 2030'. This allowed us to think about how we need to change, and how we must work and do things differently.
- Working with Public Health Wales on their System Change work linked to the Healthier Wales programme, which includes creating healthy environments and active travel. An integrated approach to this work also recognises how this contributes to improving our health and social care system in the long term.
- Young people from across the region told us what they wanted to see in their futures and told us what needs to change to get there.
- Improving green spaces across the region through our Green Networks and 'prescribing' them to communities as ways of promoting good physical and mental health in future generations
- Circular Economic Innovation Communities have helped PSB partners work towards reducing waste

### Prevention:

By taking a preventative approach to delivering services and working with our workforce, we have enabled an increased understanding among the workforce of their own well-being and lifestyle choices and developed services to prevent some of our most vulnerable residents from experiencing further risk factors. This has been achieved by:

- Delivering the CHOICE project, which offers advice and support to vulnerable women in our communities to access long-acting reversible contraception (LARC). The programme has been expanded to include a CHOICE street-based service, supporting homeless clients. As of the 31 January 2023, the project has supported 1,121 clients.
- Developing the Vulnerability Profile work, led by Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, which is nearing completion. This work focuses on supporting the sharing of characteristics between the Health Board and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council pilot area, to recognise the socio-economic and health barriers that a child and their families face in having the best start in life. The project has informed planning of school places, helped with supporting child vaccination and health screening.
- PSB are partners learning from each other on how to support staff with Mental health issues and promote healthy lifestyle choices.



## Taking this learning forward

During the development of the Well-being Plan and the establishment of the new regional PSB, members of both boards have met and reflected on the things that are important to them to keep from the previous plans and from the previous PSBs in terms of ways of working. We have valued coming together to learn from each other, share approaches and have collaborative conversation. We have trusted relationships to build on that meant that we could respond during covid, cutting through bureaucracy to respond to community need.

We recognise that communities have solutions, and we want to work towards a future where the community trusts and works closely with the PSB. We have benefited from the expertise and strengths of all kinds of partners across all areas of the delivery of the well-being plans. Through the PSB our professional networks are important and valuable. We also recognise that there are challenges in balancing the longer-term preventative focus with short-term organisational demands.

## Keep in Touch

We will always welcome contact from anyone interested in improving well-being in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg area. There are lots of different ways to get involved. You can find out more about PSBs and a link to our contact details [here](#)





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

### **CABINET**

**MONDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023**

#### **REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA) and INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2016 (IPA) - USE OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS DURING 2022 BY RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE DEPUTY LEADER, CLLR WEBBER**

**Author: Judith Parry, Trading Standards & Registrar Service Manager**

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

The purpose of the report is to enable Members to review:

- 1.1 The Council's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (as amended) (RIPA) for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022;
- 1.2 The Council's use of the Acquisition of Communications Data under the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA) for the same period; and
- 1.3 The proposed amendment to the Corporate Policy and Procedures Document on The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA).

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the content of the report;
- 2.2 Acknowledge that investigatory powers in respect of covert surveillance and acquisition of communications data have been used in an appropriate manner that is consistent with the Council's RIPA and IPA policies during the period 1<sup>st</sup> January – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022;
- 2.3 Approve the amendment to Appendix 1 of the Corporate Policy and Procedures Document on The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA).

### **3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To ensure Members are kept appraised as to how RIPA has been used during the period 1<sup>st</sup> January – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 and that it has been used in an appropriate manner consistent with the Council's RIPA policies.
- 3.2 The Cabinet is responsible for providing oversight for effective and appropriate use of specific investigatory powers under the Council's Corporate RIPA and IPA Policies.
- 3.3 The Cabinet is responsible for approving revisions to the Council's Corporate RIPA Policy in order to ensure that it remains both accurate and fit for purpose.

### **4. USE OF RIPA BY THE COUNCIL: 1<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY TO 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2022**

#### **Directed Surveillance and the use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources**

##### **New Authorisations**

- 4.1 During the period 1<sup>st</sup> January – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 there were no authorisations in respect of directed surveillance. During the same period, there were no authorisations for the use of covert human intelligence sources.
- 4.2 Directed surveillance authorisations can be issued where it is necessary and proportionate in order to prevent or detect crime, or prevent disorder, where at least one of the offences is punishable by a maximum term of imprisonment of at least six months or more or relates to the underage sale of alcohol or tobacco/nicotine.
- 4.3 The overt monitoring to reduce fly-tipping in the local authority area is proving successful in terms of evidence to take court action; 2023 will likely see a mix of overt and covert (requiring RIPA authorisation) activity to further address this issue.

##### **Authorisations extant as at 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022**

- 4.4 There were no directed surveillance authorisations that were carried forward from the previous calendar year (2021). Similarly, no authorisations in respect of a Covert Human Intelligence Source extant remain extant.

##### **Authorisations extant as at 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023**

- 4.5 No authorisations have been carried forward into 2023.

## Human Rights Act Authorisations

- 4.6 At the commencement of an investigation, officers may need to carry out non-overt work which does not fall within the statutory requirements for RIPA, predominantly because the work is carried out in a manner that there is little likelihood of obtaining private information (collateral intrusion). The use of non-overt enforcement techniques are assessed to ensure that they are carried out in compliance with the requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA). Such assessments are recorded on a Human Rights Act consideration form, whereby the necessity, proportionality and purpose of the activity are addressed, precautions are introduced to minimise collateral intrusion and the use of the technique is approved by a senior manager.
- 4.7 If this preparatory investigative work carried indicates that an investigation needs to be carried out using RIPA-based techniques, officers will apply for RIPA authorisation.
- 4.8 During the period of this report, the HRA authorisations were:

<i>Anti-social behaviour monitoring</i>	0
<i>Underage sales test purchasing</i>	3
<i>Proxy sales monitoring</i>	0
<i>Internet site monitoring</i>	48
<i>Vehicle test purchasing</i>	0

- 4.9 Of note this period is the increase in respect of internet site monitoring. Such sites are predominantly monitored for investigations into sale of illegal product via social media.
- 4.10 Additionally, legitimate businesses who trade solely via social media may use their personal social media presence to sell their products. In these instances, it is important to ensure that collateral intrusion is minimised when that site is 'inspected' in the same way that a high street shop may be inspected for legal compliance of goods or services supplied.
- 4.11 Whilst monitoring through social media may initially be considered intrusive, in many instances it can lead to a level of remote interaction between service areas and businesses that results in timelier resolution to enquiries.
- 4.12 Activity in relation to underage sales test purchasing has recommenced after national risk assessment recommended a temporary cessation during the pandemic. The figure of 3 in the table at 4.8 relates to the number of days operations were conducted. In total, this represents 34 attempted sales for a number of age restricted products. Age-restricted products were supplied to an underage volunteer on five separate occasions. Two related

to alcohol sale: one premises was served a closure order, and another is subject to monitoring due to change of ownership, post-sale. Three further sales are subject to ongoing investigation: these relate to the sale of two vapes, and one knife.

- 4.13 A review of HRA authorisations show that on no occasion did they result in an improper infringement of a person's human rights.

### **Communications Data**

- 4.14 During the reporting period, three applications for communications data were submitted via the National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN) in relation to telephone numbers used as part of fraudulent activity.
- 4.15 All three applications related to traders resident outside of Rhondda Cynon Taf who had defrauded local residents; two of the applications related to the same investigation.
- 4.16 The two linked applications resulted in tracing the trader to Derbyshire, and the investigation is progressing with surveyors reports being conducted on the work carried out. The second application returned information which pointed to a prolific rogue trader in the Cardiff area, unfortunately the consumer paid in cash and the work had already been rectified, hence no direct evidence to progress the investigation; however, information has been recorded on the Intelligence Database.

## **5 AMENDMENT TO THE CORPORATE RIPA POLICY**

- 5.1 Appendix 1 (p.37) of the Corporate Policy and Procedures Document on The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) lists those officers who can act as Authorising Officers for RIPA applications, prior to their submission to the Magistrates' Court. During review it was noted that a number of these officers had left the local authority, and there were changes in job title for others.
- 5.2 The Annex to this report shows the existing Appendix 1 and a proposed amendment. Whilst the number of Authorising Officers has reduced, there is still sufficient to meet both the demand of applications and legal requirements under the Act. Officers listed have all received training in relation to the Act and responsibilities as Authorising Officers. Further training is planned for 2023.

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

An equality impact assessment is not needed as the content of this report is for information purposes only.

**7 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

Both RIPA and IPA policies are available on the Council website in Welsh.

**8 CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

This report has been prepared in consultation with the Council's Trading Standards and Registrar Service Manager who is responsible for operational oversight of RIPA matters.

**9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

**10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

The Regulations of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) and the Investigatory Powers Act (IPA) place a duty on local authorities to ensure that identified activity is compliant with legal controls and subject to annual scrutiny. Associated Home Office Codes of Practice require a local authority to have up to date and accurate procedures in place to ensure that the legal requirements are complied with. These procedures must be made public.

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

The use of RIPA and IPA as tools to effectively target illegal activity within the local authority, such as rogue trading and fly-tipping, links to two of the three Corporate Priorities, namely ensuing PLACES where people are proud to live, work and play, and enabling PROSPERITY for people and business to fulfil their potential and prosper.

Additionally, four of the seven Well-being Goals under the Well-being of Future Generations Act are met, namely a Prosperous Wales, a Healthier Wales, a More Equal Wales and a Globally Responsible Wales.

**12 STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS**

The contents of this report are not specific to any one electoral ward.

**13 CONCLUSION**

The Senior Responsible Officer (Director of Legal & Democratic Services) considers that RIPA has been used appropriately in relation to the use of directed surveillance and acquiring of communications data as identified in this report; and that RIPA has been used in a manner that is consistent with the Council's Corporate Policies.

**Other Information:-**

***Relevant Scrutiny Committee:*** Overview Scrutiny

## ANNEX TO REPORT

CURRENT APPENDIX 1: CORPORATE RIPA POLICY (p.37)

### APPENDIX 1

#### List of Authorising Officer Posts

GROUP	Name of Contact Officer
<p><b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE</b>  <i>Authorising Officers:</i>            Chief Executive             Director of Regeneration and Planning</p>	<p>- Chris Bradshaw             - Jane Cook</p>
<p><b>CORPORATE SERVICES</b>  <i>Authorising Officers:</i>             Director of Legal and Democratic Services            Service Director, Legal and Democratic Services            Principal Solicitor            Solicitor            Head of Reviews and Benefits            Team Manager Benefits</p>	<p>-            - Chris Jones            - Paul Nicholls            - Simon Humphreys            - Andrew Symes            - Helen Phillips</p>
<p><b>COMMUNITY &amp; CHILDREN'S SERVICES</b>  <i>Authorising Officers:</i>             Service Director, Public Health &amp; Protection            Environmental Protection Manager            Community Safety Manager            Trading Standards Manager            Housing and Enforcement Project Manager            Food and Health and Safety Manager            Pollution Manager            Licensing Manager</p>	<p>- Paul Mee            -- Louise Davies            -            -            - Jennifer Ellis            -            - Neil Piliner            -</p>
<p>Service Director Planning            Manager Special Projects            Planning Enforcement Manager             Service Director for Highways &amp; Streetcare            Head of Streetcare</p>	<p>- Simon Gale            - Jim Bailey            - Julie Williams             - Nigel Wheeler            - Steve Owen</p>

SUGGESTED AMENDED APPENDIX 1: CORPORATE RIPA POLICY (p.37)

**APPENDIX 1**

**List of Authorising Officer Posts**

<b>GROUP</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
<p><b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE</b></p> <p><i>Authorising Officers:</i></p> <p>Chief Executive                      Director of Legal Services &amp; SRO                      Service Director Legal Services</p>	<p>Paul Mee                      Andy Wilkins                      Paul Nicholls</p>
<p><b>CORPORATE AND FRONTLINE SERVICES</b></p> <p><i>Authorising Officers:</i></p> <p>Service Director, Streetcare Services                      Head of Revenue and Benefits</p>	<p>Steve Owen                      Matthew Phillips</p>
<p><b>COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES</b></p> <p><i>Authorising Officers:</i></p> <p>Director of Public Health, Protection &amp; Community Services                      Trading Standards and Registrar Services Manager                      Environmental Protection and Housing Standards Manager</p>	<p>Louise Davies                      Judith Parry                      Neil Pilliner</p>



**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

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

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**27<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND  
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES IN  
DISCUSSION WITH THE DEPUTY LEADER, CLLR WEBBER**

**ITEM: REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA) and  
INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2016 (IPA) - USE OF INVESTIGATORY  
POWERS DURING 2022 BY RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH  
COUNCIL**

**Background Papers**

Freestanding Matter

Officer to contact:

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**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT 2021/2022**

**27<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023**

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

**Author: Melanie Warburton, Diversity and Inclusion Manager**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide information on the Council's Annual Equality Report, for the year 2021/22.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Considers the information contained within the report;
- 2.2 Note the comments and observations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, following pre-scrutiny of the Annual Equality Report on the [21<sup>st</sup> March 2023](#) (An overview of the comments will be presented to Cabinet)
- 2.3 Subject to any further comment by Cabinet Members agree to publish the Annual Equality Report 2021/22 as attached to this report at Appendix A

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Annual Equality Report has been developed to fulfil the Council's legal duties and obligations to report on its progress in delivering the General and Specific Equality Duties.
- 3.2 The report contains progress made in year 2021/22 in meeting the equality objectives contained in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan.

**4. BACKGROUND**

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

4.2 Reporting requirements are set out in the following regulations;

Regulation 7 Collection and publication of information

Regulation 9 Employment monitoring reporting

Regulation 16 Reporting on compliance with the General duty.

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

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

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

**6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

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

**7. CONSULTATION/ INVOLVEMENT**

Consultation is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only, however, the report contained within Appendix A has been presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for pre scrutiny prior to consideration by Cabinet, and an overview of the comments will be presented to Cabinet.

**8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

**9. LEGAL OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

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

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

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

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

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

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**27<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2023**

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

\*

**Background papers: Annual Equality Report 2021/2022**

**Officer to contact: Melanie Warburton, Diversity and Inclusion Manager**

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# **Rhondda Cynon Taf Council**

## **Annual Equality Report**

**1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022**

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

To make a request please telephone 01443 444529 or email [equality@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:equality@rctcbc.gov.uk)

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## **1. Introduction**

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

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

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

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

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

**Councillor Maureen Webber**  
**Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member for Council Business**

## 2. Who We Are

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council covers a wide geographical area and has a population of over 237,700 (Office of National Statistics (ONS) – Census 2021). The Council is the largest employer in the local area and the third largest local authority in Wales, over 79% of employees live within the Council boundaries.

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

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

- Ensuring **People**: are independent, healthy and successful;
- Creating **Places**: where people are proud to live, work and play;
- Enabling **Prosperity**: creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.

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

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

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

## 3. Reporting on Equality

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

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires that all public authorities covered under the specific duties in Wales should produce an Annual Equality Report by 31 March each year. This report covers the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

## **What the regulations require:**

The Annual Report for 2021-2022 must set out:

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

## **4. The General Equality Duty**

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

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

### **Protected Characteristics**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **5. How We Meet The General Equality Duty**

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

### **IDENTIFICATION AND COLLECTION OF RELEVANT INFORMATION**

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

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

Full details can be found in the SEP which can be accessed on the Council website at: [Strategic Equality Plan](#)

The information identified is still very relevant to the delivery of the General and Specific Duties; internal documents provide statistical information that can be used for determining action and enable comparison to identify improvements or areas for further improvement. Internal strategies and their action plans provide information on how the Council is delivering its priorities. External information, including that with a national context, provides the Council with a raft of data that can assist in developing appropriate and relevant policies and approaches.

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

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

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

## **THE COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE**

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

## **NON COLLECTION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF INFORMATION**

Whilst considerable relevant information has been collected for this report, it is acknowledged that it is sometimes difficult to collect and monitor all information in a Council as large as Rhondda Cynon Taf. A number of cross-Council networks already exist, such as the Disability Officers Group, to ensure that information and good practice are monitored and shared, however it is recognised that improvements can always be made to encourage a consistent approach in information sharing.

## **Use of Information**

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

- The Council's Corporate Plan (2020-2024)
- Service delivery/projects (2021-2022)
- Employment practices
- Consultation and engagement programme
- EIAs (2021-2022)
- Employment monitoring information (2021-2022)
- Monitoring and delivery of the SEP action plan (2021-2022).

## **Equality Information from Service Areas**

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

### **ADULT SOCIAL CARE SERVICES**

We continue to promote equality of opportunity for local people by providing accessible information about the services available to them. We do this through:

- ensuring a single point of access to our services which allows for consistency of approach;
- engaging, consulting and more recently co-producing service offers with local people to inform existing service delivery and future plans;
- undertaking assessments to determine if there is any equalities impact on our policies and activities;
- delivering services in ways which are appropriate to service user needs and, whenever possible, removing barriers which may deny access;
- increasing the availability of advocacy support to service users;

- promoting widely the availability of the Council's Complaint Process.

We have continued to embed outcome focused approaches based in practice and, in doing this, we are supporting people to achieve their own identified wellbeing outcomes. Matters relating to consent, advocacy, mental capacity, and best interests were routinely considered at an early stage in the engagement process. The information gained is used appropriately to inform assessments and care and support planning.

We are however, reviewing our approach to strength-based practice. We are considering alternative and innovative ways of working to deliver better outcomes for the local people who rely on our social care support through the adoption of the 3 conversations approach. This approach has been implemented successfully at other Councils, who have seen a wide range of benefits including:

- Happier residents: receiving people-centred support, focused on what they tell us will make the biggest difference for them;
- Reduced waiting lists: with quicker response times and less time spent screening;
- Better commissioning: based on a better understanding of what local people need;
- Stronger relationships: with Health colleagues and other partners.

This is a major change from how we currently work. Therefore, if we decide to progress with this new way of working, we will first be trialling the approach and will then evaluate what has worked well and where we can make improvements before rolling out this new way of working across the whole service. Evaluation will include feedback from those who use our services, our partners, providers and Council teams who support adult social care.

## **ARTS, CULTURE AND LIBRARIES SERVICE**

The department delivers a wide range of provision that focuses on people with disabilities, and people who are vulnerable over a range of issues or who are affected by poverty.

Services have worked closely with partners and continue to do so to identify any areas of concern as early as possible so that appropriate support is provided by the most suitable partner to meet resident needs. The Community Support Steering Group is key in this. This network has been the platform for sharing information and encouraging joint working.

We offer a range of support that focuses on improving the lives of those disadvantaged through ill health, disability, economic circumstances as follows:

- We are rolling out Dementia Friends e-learning across the workforce.
- The Library Service actively supports local and national initiatives designed to promote inclusiveness and diversity, such as promoting books by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic authors; accessing funding to provide activities that encourage socialisation; the People's Library Wales pilot encouraging 'books' to share their real-life stories on topics such as body dysmorphia, racism, and domestic abuse.
- Provision of a range of Remote Library Services, including e-books and e-audio books and the @Home Library Service.
- The facilitation of increased adult changing places in communities, with potential future development through the Shared Prosperity Fund.
- Undertaking wellbeing assessments with individuals to identify needs and connect to relevant services and community organisations, such as Ukrainian refugees.

In relation to the Ukraine response, cultural orientation sessions have taken place with both staff and guests of welcome centres in RCT, with additional weekly briefings being supported by translators. All information is provided in Ukrainian, with staff and guests communicating on daily matters using Google translate and social media systems which also have this facility.

Many of our publications are available in Easy Read format to encourage participation from people with Physical and Learning Disabilities. We've worked alongside RCT People First to co-produce Easy Read documents with service users. Examples include:

1. Easy Read Residents Survey

The same survey questions are asked but in plain and simple language that is accompanied by pictures. One of our Community Coordinators targeted an autism session at Abercynon pool to specifically seek opinions and views from people and their parents / carers. This ensured their voices, values and opinions were included in the overall results that directly impacts the service we provide, and the funding made available for community groups.



## 2. Wales & West Utilities Project

RCT People First produced Easy Read information to go with the distribution of Carbon Monoxide monitors. A booklet was co-produced with service users with learning disabilities and an illustrator.

RCT People First have been telling our members in meetings about the importance of Carbon Monoxide monitors and the benefits of the Priority Service Register.

These Easy Read documents were used by other partners including RCT Adult Services. Adult Services provided 3 x music sessions with Forget Me Not Productions for adults with a learning disability and support staff. Groups looked at safety messages via a creative project and made up a safety slogan. The slogan was made into a jingle or short song. The jingle was shared with Wales & West Utilities and RCT Council Website as a press release.

### **COMMUNITY AND WELSH LANGUAGE SERVICES**

The service continues to work closely with a range of partners e.g. DWP, Citizens Advice (CA) RCT to promote the support available for Universal Credit (UC) claimants. This has included information on social media and the Council website, dissemination of information to all Council staff and distribution across a wide range of partner networks. In addition to the offer of welfare checks and debt advice from CA, the Adult Education service has developed free budgeting courses for those who need this support.

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

- Specific provision is delivered by the Adult Community Learning team for people with learning disabilities.
- The Employment Support team continues to be actively engaged in the Transformation programme for people with learning disabilities.
- Community for Work+ managers have designated disability leads and attend Welsh Government Disability Network meetings and staff teams have attended relevant training sessions.
- The Adult Community Learning Partnership in RCT continues to engage with a higher percentage of people from the most disadvantaged wards than most other areas of Wales.

- Employment support staff have and continue to support Ukrainian refugees to find work locally.
- We have supported the CELT regional project which supports vulnerable residents to access pre-employment activities e.g. ex-offenders diversionary activities and wellbeing support for people who are economically inactive and in need of mental and physical wellbeing interventions.

## **COMMUNITY SAFETY AND COMMUNITY HOUSING**

The service area works with a wide range of people from many diverse backgrounds and cultures as set out below.

### **Housing Solutions Service**

A return to face-to-face working has supported a return to a more effective interpersonal interface for those customers most in need and who have vulnerabilities. The provision of the Rough-sleeper Outreach service attached to Mill Street Hostel has ensured that the Service responds quickly and effectively to engage those rough-sleeping in critical need who may be from a wide range of diverse backgrounds and are digitally excluded.

### **Homefinder**

The RCT Housing Allocation Scheme has identified key areas in need of review including adapted housing. As well as support from internal stakeholders, the review will also incorporate service user involvement via a customer panel.

Applicants who are digitally excluded are able to apply to Homefinder by telephone, however for some applicants who require more support to make an application, a face-to-face appointment is available in Sardis House, Pontypridd. Facilities for translation services are available and are arranged in advance to enable the applicant to receive a service tailored to their specific needs.

The use of Language Line for applicants in need of translation services is available to all service areas and where required, BSL interpreters can also be utilised for Homefinder applicants.

### **Area Substance Misuse Commissioning Team**

Barod and Cwm Taf Morganwg Community Health Board are commissioned to provide substance misuse services across the region. Individuals who have issues with substance misuse, are categorised as vulnerable because of the nature of their

problems. In addition, many have additional issues such as childhood trauma, domestic abuse, and/or poor physical health.

All services are required to have in place an equal opportunities policy and meet equality objectives in relation to protective characteristics. This is monitored as part of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Area Planning Monitoring Framework.

Vulnerable and marginalised groups include Homeless people, looked after children, those in the criminal justice system, sex workers, victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse, gypsy travellers, refugees, and veterans. In line with clinical guidelines, all veterans are entitled to priority access to services.

Access to service is a key driver for service provision across the region, the Specialist Mental Health and Substance Misuse Housing Outreach Service was developed specifically for the most complex and vulnerable individuals who find it challenging to engage with traditional community and clinic based services. The team continue to monitor equality and inclusion through annual compliance and monitoring of services and quarterly contract review meetings.

### **Complex Needs Panel**

The service area is also heavily involved with the Serious Neglect Panel and the local multi-agency working arrangements agreed by the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board to provide an escalation process for managing cases of serious self-neglect linked with vulnerable individuals.

## **COMMUNITY WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE**

The Community Wellbeing and Resilience Service has commissioned a specialist Autism training and consultancy organisation 'Outside Education' to review the current activities offered and consider in the context of neuro-divergent users of the service. As part of the review, Outside will undertake consultation events with children, young people, parents and staff, with the aim of understanding what the barriers are to participation, and the development needs of the staff to improve professional practice. The findings from the review will inform an action plan to address barriers, make service improvements, identify areas of staff training, whilst retaining and building upon current good practice. The aim is to improve the service offer available to ensure that neuro-divergent children, young people and families are not disadvantaged and have equity in accessing activities and services. From a strategic perspective the review will inform the planning, contracting and commissioning activities to ensure the service and the partner organisations are delivering fully inclusive early intervention and prevention services to neuro-divergent users of services.

## **Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS)**

YEPS has a Youth Engagement Officer who is able to offer specialist support and advice to young people who are LGBTQIA+. This specialist support includes working with young people who are transitioning, their families and schools to ensure that bespoke and robust plans are in place to provide practical and emotional support throughout the process of transition. The LGBTQIA+ support group 'Enfys' was also launched and runs on a weekly basis.

Stemming from the YEPS Equality & Diversity Youth Forum, the Pride event was established, which was a great success, celebrating not only the LGBTQIA+ community, but diversity in general. This event showcased excellent external and internal partnership working between YEPS, Play, South Wales Police and several other services. Over 1800 people attended the event at Aberdare Park, which was televised by S4C Cymru and aired during prime time on TV.

YEPS worked in partnership with Ysgol Ty Coch to offer the young people an opportunity to engage in enriching activities. Some of the activities included arts & crafts sessions and off-site trips. The sessions were offered after school and during the school holidays to ensure they were as accessible as possible. All sessions were well attended, with positive feedback from young people.

Travel training is delivered by YEPS post 16 Team for young people in need of assistance with road safety awareness and knowledge of how to travel by public transport. Travel training is particularly beneficial to individuals who have Additional Learning Needs (ALN) who have had taxi transport to school and are daunted by accessing further education, work placements, training and other life opportunities after school as a result of having no prior experience in preparing and planning journeys independently. Many young people are unfamiliar with where to find information and advice and do not have the skills to make journeys themselves. Whilst this work has been on hold during the pandemic, YEPS are in the process of restarting the programme of training it delivers in partnership with the Council's Integrated Transport Unit.

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

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

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

YEPS link in with Arts Development Team's 'Fortitude through Music' Project to support vulnerable young people to access the project which uses music as a tool to build and develop transferable skills, confidence and resilience in young people not in education, training or employment.

### **Play Services and Day Nurseries**

The Care2Play Officer works with a key contact from each of the special schools in the borough to identify children who would benefit from the service each term. One-page profiles are shared with the designated play team who will then plan the play activities to meet the individual needs of the child attending, enabling them to access their play offer at community-based play provisions.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment was submitted this year, part of which was to ensure that parks, playgrounds and other outdoor play settings are accessible to as many residents as possible. This includes wheelchair access to enter the parks and to access the play equipment. Access audits are undertaken on all playscheme premises and the information captured in the audit aims to inform service users of the accessibility of the buildings in which the playscheme sessions are being delivered in.

Pontypridd Day Nursery has achieved recognition as an 'Autism Friendly Workplace', implementing strategies which recognise and support neurodiversity.

As part of the Welsh Government overarching [ALN Transformation Programme](#), a unified legislative framework to support children and young people aged 0-25 with ALN has led to key changes across childcare settings. Childcare staff have received training on this and are now conversant with the changes to the graduated response, ensuring that they are effectively supporting those with emerging needs.

The creation of a single point of access via the Resilient Families Service has facilitated equity of access to service delivery, enabling services to be responsive to any needs identified. Our vision of delivering the right services to the right people at the right time in the right place supports the delivery of equitable and easily accessible needs-based services. Addressing, and where possible, removing barriers to access and engagement for particular groups, including, but not limited to, those with protected characteristics, is an ongoing priority.

The Funding Flexibilities Team has worked closely with the Disabled Children's Team (DCT) to revise and update the specification for Rhondda Short Breaks following some concerns raised by the Service Manager relating to the service provision not aligning to the enablement ethos of the Disabled Children's Team. The service specification was updated to fully reflect the practice changes required and new performance indicators agreed that provided meaningful monitoring data. Through this work other documentation was developed including a process map. The working relationship between DCT and the provider has improved, as has the overall service delivery for vulnerable children and young people. The Funding Flexibilities Team led the monitoring of the contract and facilitate the quarterly meetings.

In response to the needs of Flying Start childcare settings additional support has been made available to providers to develop the play plans required for children to be discussed at Early Years ALN Panel. Feedback from the ALN Forum indicated there was a clear training need regarding play plans as the quality of the ones being produced by childcare settings demonstrated they were having difficulties generating appropriate SMART targets, interpreting advice and support from professional services and marrying documentation and evidence to record and monitor the presenting needs of children. The team's Assistant Educational Psychologist has designed and implemented virtual play plan clinics as a drop in, easy access forum for settings to access specific advice and support about play plan targets. These clinics have been well received, well attended and supported by the Early Years' Advisory Teacher in Education and have now been opened up to non-Flying Start settings to ensure a unified, inclusive approach across all of Early Years.

## **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND ELECTED MEMBERS**

### **Diversity in Democracy**

A Cross Party Diversity and Democracy Working Group was established in 2021, recognising the importance of democratic institutions and public services to reflect the diversity of the population they represent and serve. The aim of the Working Group is to:

- increase diversity within democracy at the local Government Elections 2022 and any future election;
- reduce the barriers to attracting a more diverse pool of candidates;
- promote and raise awareness of the role of a Councillor and the work undertaken;
- consider Officer proposals to engage and support potential candidates;

- consider and comment upon engagement with 16–17 year old's in local government democracy;
- consider proposals for the future training / information provided to Councillors in respect of diversity;
- inform discussions with Group Leaders ahead of the 2022 Local Government Elections.

The Working Group recognised that their work will be an ongoing process to ensure that a more diverse democratic environment is created within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

A number of initiatives took place throughout the year to support this agenda including:

- Working collaboratively with the Youth Engagement and Participation Service, Schools and Colleges in the run up to the 2022 Local Government Election to further promote and educate the importance of the youth vote and the democratic process. The YEPs campaign 'isityourfirsttime' led by young people was shared through a number of platforms via the service (facebook, twitter, snapchat, Instagram, ticktock), including use of the YEPs tv live (an online programme dedicated to the voting campaign). Members were advised that the youth Members were the mouthpiece to promoting the campaign to their peers and positive engagement had been received. In addition youth workers based within schools and colleges were also assisting with promoting the campaign message.
- Improving the Council Websites 'Democracy pages' to promote the role of a Councillor with details and videos of local Members, promote how the work of a Councillor links in with everyday services taken forward by the Council and provide details and links of the different tiers of government to assist in increasing the understanding of democracy within RCT and Wales. To ensure that the page demonstrates the features available to Members – such as translation facilities, audio equipment within the Chamber, Hybrid meeting opportunities and promoting reasonable adjustments to prevent any perceived barriers for any future candidate.
- Making physical improvements to the Council Chamber to ensure that the Chamber is fully accessible.
- Inviting representatives from Race Alliance Wales and WEN Wales to discuss diversity campaigns.
- To ensure Equality and Diversity training is part of Elected member induction.

## **HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

A programme of improvements to bus borders to improve accessibility has been ongoing over the last 11 years. In 2008-2009 RCT was placed at 21<sup>st</sup> in Wales with only 3.23% of its bus stops being equipped with accessible kerbs. Figures for 2020-2021 indicate that 63.25% of the 1,208 bus stops in RCT now have raised access points to facilitate easier access. There is no data available to indicate what position RCT is in Wales due to the effects of the Covid pandemic. A further £440k is being expended on bus borders this year.

As part of the Highways Investment Programme the Council continues to invest in the provision of dropped kerbs and tactile crossings throughout the borough, concentrating on areas of high footfall.

In order to keep our town centres pedestrian friendly and accessible the Street Café Permit Scheme in Pontypridd and Aberdare has continued and been re-evaluated to provide, where possible, further areas for outdoor eating as a result of the Covid pandemic and to promote a café culture. This has been a success and well received by access groups due to the layouts and barriers complying with strict specifications.

The [A4119 dualling project](#) will also include a 3 metre wide Active Travel compliant footbridge with both steps and ramped access areas which will accommodate users of all mobility to be able to safely cross the A4119 at Coed Ely.

The service area has continued to assess the major Active Travel routes within the borough and have removed barriers from the Porth Community Route, Church Village Bypass Community Route, Taf Trail and Cynon Trail. This will ensure that access to these routes can be gained by the public with mobility issues.

## **LEISURE, SPORT AND PARKS, BEREAVEMENT SERVICES & HERITAGE AND VISITOR ATTRACTIONS**

### **Leisure, Sport and Parks**

The service strives to be inclusive and offers the following:

- All refurbishment works are accessible and will include gender neutral facilities and family changing areas where possible.
- Leisure products are offered specifically for veterans, foster families, and carers.
- We deliver the Welsh Government free swim initiative.
- We promote initiatives from Stonewall and the Terence Higgins Trust such as the rainbow laces.



- Facilities display the LGBTQIA+ flag promoting inclusivity and non-discrimination.
- Facilities provide opportunities for gateway to employment students to have work experience and job opportunities.
- The Leisure for Life membership scheme includes a reduced rate for specific protected characteristics.
- Targeting inequalities is the biggest driver for sport. Focus on intervention for women and girls and socio-economic deprivation as well as health intervention programmes. A range of [case studies](#) were developed as part of the evaluation of projects.
- Working with vulnerable residents will continue to be a priority for the team. Initiatives will focus on supporting vulnerable residents to be active in a wide variety of settings.
- We have linked with Sight Life to review how the leisure centres can implement changes to support visually impaired customers.
- Leisure Services have attended the Older Persons Forums offering free day passes to help with customer confidence and any timetable queries. Staff have taken small group fitness sessions and given advice sessions to help with their fitness goals.

### **Bereavement Services**

This service prides itself in having practises to ensure equality and diversity. The service caters for a wide range of religions including short notice burials. Both chapels are fitted with a hearing loop. Roadside graves are kept for families that require disabled access.

### **Heritage and Visitor Attractions**

- Staff have attended autism awareness training and provide autism friendly visits.
- Staff have attended Dementia Friendly training.
- The service has installed changing places facilities at the 3 visitor attractions and undertaken an independent [disabled access audit](#) and produced access statements on all three attraction's websites.
- Tomos Churchill, a Ranger in Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, has achieved an Engage to Change Participant Award from Learning Disability Wales.
- Playgrounds continue to undertake an independent accessibility review of all play facilities.

- The team continue to consult with local groups that provide opportunities for children with disabilities to better understand local needs, for example quiet sessions in play areas targeting children with autism and the provision of inclusive play equipment.
- All Community Centres are now accessible.
- The centres offer a diverse programme of activities for all residents.
- Centres are situated in economically deprived communities and offer affordable local opportunities for all.

## **PUBLIC PROTECTION AND REGULATORY SERVICES**

The Registrar Service offers an out of hours and emergency service in respect of certain religious burial requirements, and the conducting of marriages where one of the party is terminally ill or aged.

This service is now able to offer 'signed' services, and our first signed ceremony is booked for 2023.

The Trading Standards and Registrar Services Managers are taking part in a trial of a race and equality mentoring project, involving 14 people across the UK, led by the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers.

Allergen Resources (electronic leaflets and videos) for Food Standards are available in 14 languages which are used by officers as part of ongoing inspection work and shared via social media at relevant intervals throughout the year. This ensures better understanding of complex legal requirements which can have potentially life-threatening results if not correctly followed.

A review into the availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV) in the taxi trade has been conducted and proposals that will help the trade to increase the number of WAV brought into service has been implemented.

Fair and equal access to low cost Pest Control is being evaluated to assess possible options to improve uptake for low income families due to concern members of these households are not able to access this public health service.

## **INTEGRATED TRANSPORT UNIT**

The Service seeks to provide residents and businesses with the assistance they need at the first point of contact, encouraging greater access to online services and support.

Free bus travel for the elderly and disabled ensures that the service is inclusive. All residents over 60 are entitled to receive a concessionary bus pass and 48,645 in total take up this offer. A further 5,582 passes are issued to those who have a disability or need a companion to assist them when travelling.

Taking on board feedback from the Local Access Group, the Service has secured funding from a number of sources to undertake corridor-based bus stop enhancements, as well as meeting a number of specific local requests. The work involves the installation of new shelters (where footway space permits), new bus stop poles and flags, new raised kerbs to provide step free entry onto the buses, resurfacing of the passenger waiting area and renewal of bus stop road markings.

The investment in bus stop infrastructure has been significant in the past decade, helping it to have 764 of its bus stops equipped with accessible raised kerbs by the end of 2022.

Keeping the borough moving, the Service delivers improvements to roads, pavements and public transport, whilst also improving air quality, all of which make it easier for shoppers to visit town centres using public transport or active travel. It is also exploring opportunities to develop a cycle network to major destinations in the borough without impeding main traffic routes.

In order to address resident's concerns about indiscriminate parking making it difficult for buses to stop close to the kerb and impeding the free flow of traffic, mobile camera enforcement has been successful in keeping pedestrian crossings, school entrances and bus stops clear of unlawfully parked vehicles.

Improvements such as new crossings, developments and road safety features ensure that the highways network, and safe walking routes, is constantly evolving. These changes affect entitlement to free school transport and therefore it is prudent to periodically review the impact of such changes and update individual eligibility.

The Special Educational Needs (SEN) transport provision is tailored to the individual needs of the learner by a specialist team within the Service, and reflects the physical make-up of the community, with 930 of the 12,130 transported learners (7.69%) having additional learning needs. Throughout the year, further drivers and passenger assistants received special training in autism and epilepsy awareness, first aid, and understanding and managing strategies to support challenging behaviour.

Over a number of years, the Service has worked with the YEPS and the Transition Team within Community Care and Children's Services to provide independent travel

training to assist people of all ages, abilities and needs that do not have road safety awareness or awareness of travelling unaccompanied on public transport.

Participants of a Council run Management Development programme looked at the travel training provision within the Council and concluded that current programmes were disjointed, with no cohesive direction or collaboration. Further work was undertaken and an “Invest to Save” Business Case was approved by Cabinet in December 2021 to employ an Independent Travel Training Co-ordinator within the Integrated Transport Unit to collaborate with other departments, set up a generalised referral system and training programme throughout the Authority, and identify suitable individuals who would benefit from travel training.

### **WALES INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION SERVICE**

The Council is a partner in the Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS) and has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for delivery of the service provided via the City of Cardiff Council. During 2021-2022 there were 379 bookings made through the service using 28 languages and BSL interpreters.

The five most requested languages during 2021-2022 were Urdu, Polish, Tamil, Mandarin, and Turkish.

### **DELIVERY OF COUNCIL STRATEGIES**

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

The Council continues to develop and increase engagement through our Let's Talk RCT engagement website [Let's Talk RCTCBC](#). The site has a suite of engagement tools that has enhanced our offer and made our engagements more user friendly.

We have continued our conversation on Climate Change through a number of projects, including Let's Talk EV, Let's Talk Wildflowers, Let's Talk Trees and [Let's Talk Climate Change RCT | Let's Talk RCTCBC](#) and used a wide variety of tools to engage with members of the public including a survey, ideas, stories, quick polls and places (mapping tool). In addition, Let's Talk was used for projects on Leisure services, Pontypridd Regeneration Strategy and the Local Development Plan.

During 2022, we supported or managed a large number of services with their consultation and engagement activities and supported a number of face-to-face engagement events.

Examples of how residents and communities have been involved in the Council's work in 2022 include:

- Engaging with residents on our budget consultation;
- Engaging with Schools and young people via Instagram and in school settings;
- Continued engagement and involvement with residents and communities in matters that affect them so that their voices are heard in Council decisions;
- Continued engagement with the Older People's Advisory Group about issues that could support their ability to get out and about. We have a joint SLA agreement with Age Connects Morgannwg and Older Peoples' Advisory Group to support and engage with older people in RCT;
- We provided a freepost and telephone option for those who cannot engage digitally, in addition to our face-to-face approach;
- We linked in with other services whilst undertaking our face-to-face events, from joining up consultations, to providing waste bags and advice and information;
- We have continued to use online and social media engagement as one of our methods to obtain resident views and promote consultations;
- Continued to make our consultations more accessible to residents, by increasing the use and availability of easy to read materials. Training our staff in the production of plain English materials;
- Further developed the use of digital engagement, through increasing the use of social media and videos.

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

## **6. Equality Objectives**

In 2019 we launched our Strategic Equality Plan (2019-2022). To aid the development of appropriate and relevant equality objectives the Equality and Human

Rights Commission report 'How Fair is Wales 2018' was the main reference source. Equality objectives were aligned to well-being goals contained in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, specifically a 'More Equal Wales' and a 'Wales of Cohesive Communities'.

A comprehensive engagement process was undertaken with the public and targeted engagement was undertaken with community groups that reflect the 'protected characteristics' contained within the Equality Act 2010.

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

- Objective 1 To better understand the needs of our communities and understand the barriers they face to thrive;
- Objective 2 To reduce inequalities that exist within our communities;
- Objective 3 To promote safe communities;
- Objective 4 To reduce the gender pay gap;
- Objective 5 To create an inclusive workforce.

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

Outlined below, we show our progress towards the equality objectives. It should be noted that not all actions were due to commence in the financial year 2019-2020 and these will be progressed in following years.

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

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

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

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

## **Community Cohesion**

The Cohesion team made connections with a number of groups including Aberdare Mosque, Friends of Bosnia Group, HOPE, Interlink Youth Group, MIND, Neighbourhood Networks, Pay What you feel Café, People 1<sup>st</sup>, Project Unity, Spectacle Theatre Group, St Catherine's Church, Valley's Ethnic Minority Support, Welcome to our Woods.

As well as working with community groups, the team were involved with a number of events and initiatives as outlined below:

### **Covid Engagement with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community members**

We worked with Interlink's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic engagement worker to complete a program of extensive engagement work, which involved visiting the majority of takeaway and convenience stores in all RCT town centres. The purpose of this piece of work was to encourage take up of the Covid vaccine and learn why a lower percentage of people taking up the offer of a vaccine were part of the minority ethnic communities. The work gave the team widespread contacts with town centres and the wider community.

### **Autism 1<sup>st</sup>**

We met with staff from Autism Life and successfully supported them to apply for funding for a gardening project. The project allowed members to profit from the therapeutic benefits of gardening, as well as allowing other allotment owners the opportunity to meet and grow with people who are on the autistic spectrum. Thus, increasing integration and decreasing isolation and exclusion.

### **Interfaith week**

An event was arranged with Cynon Valley Museum with involvement from Swansea University, local schools, and colleges to mark interfaith week. The aim was to hold a series of discussions with faith leaders and the community. However, due to the reintroduction of Covid restrictions this had to be cancelled. However, we continued to educate pupils and young people through workshops, ultimately holding an art competition.

The competition involved school and college pupils submitting a piece of work - art, a poem, short story, or photograph that depicted what faith meant to them. The competition was extremely popular and the winner, runner up and 3<sup>rd</sup> place were chosen by a local leader of the Sikh community. The hope was that this would open a space for conversation, but unfortunately restrictions meant that couldn't happen on this occasion.

## **International Women's Day (IWD)**

An event was held with Cynon Valley Museum to celebrate IWD. The event included a talk about Elaine Morgan and a panel discussion chaired by Rhian Hall, and three panellists representing business, arts and politics. The event created a safe place for women to come together and share experiences, this opened good communication links between the Cohesion team and local women.

## **Jewish History Trail**

We worked with local historian and author Dr Darry Leeworthy to curate, promote and run a Jewish history walking trail in Pontypridd. This allowed us to develop connections with people of the Jewish community as well as those keen to support the Jewish history connection of the borough.

## **LGBTQ History Month Event**

An event was held at Cynon Valley Museum to celebrate LGBTQ history month. The event included a session from academics, a reading of a play and finished with a contemporary dance performance from the Welsh Ballroom Company.

## **Operation Betsy**

We worked with South Wales Police to hold a number of engagement events looking to engage with older people and put in place safeguarding or befriending support as required.

## **RCT People 1<sup>st</sup>**

The team worked closely with People 1<sup>st</sup> on a number of projects:

- RCT People 1<sup>st</sup> roadshows – a series of in person events with the aim of increasing confidence of members when reintegrating into the community.
- Community safety film – a series of films looking at the barriers faced by those with a learning disability when accessing the community. From this came numerous concerns around disability hate crime and subsequently (post 2021-2022) the 'be my voice' campaign.
- Safe places – the initial planning stages of implementing safe places across RCT took place during 2021-2022.

## **Safeguarding week**

The Cohesion team held a session at Coleg Y Cymoedd, establishing links with the learners. This event concentrated on educating pupils of the emerging increase in spiking, including needle spiking. We were able to provide learners with bottle stoppers and information on how to keep themselves and peers safe.



## **Self Defence Classes**

We held self-defence classes for girls, creating a safe line of communication between women and girls and the community safety department. This was important as 2021 saw an increase in distrust between young women and the police.

## **Treorchy Diversity Group**

In late 2021 the Cohesion team were introduced to Treorchy Comprehensive School Diversity Group. The group initially began as a 'safe place' lunch club for any pupil who felt they would benefit from a safe place within the school. However, the space quickly became a meeting place for pupils who identified as LGBT or allies of peers who are LGBT. From the 100+ group of pupils a smaller more focused 'leadership group' emerged, this consisted of a few (mostly 6th Form) pupils who wanted to take a more active role in raising awareness of LGBT and wider diversity issues. From this grew a book club, film club, newsletter, and peer-to-peer workshops. The Cohesion team began work with the group including the development of the Youth Ambassador Program, which was launched in April 2022.

## **COUNCIL'S DISABILITY FORUM**

Telephone and digital communication has been maintained with all members of the Disability Forum this year. This has been an important link for our Forum members to discuss any concerns they have, and an opportunity to discuss their wellbeing.

While we continue to face challenges holding fully accessible face-to-face meetings due to a number of reasons, including on-going restrictions as a result of the Covid pandemic, we are hopeful that regular face-to-face meetings and communication will be able to resume in some capacity towards the end of the year. Digital or online meetings have not been possible due to a number of factors, including digital exclusion of some members and the accessibility of online platforms. Work is on-going to review the Disability Forum is as effective and helpful that it can be.

## **Veterans and Armed Forces Community**

### **Veteran Advice Service**

Funding was secured through the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund to continue our Veteran Advice service, which provides dedicated advice and support to the Armed Forces community. Since launching the service in 2019 over a 1000 referrals have been received. Some of the support provided includes: Housing, Adult Social Care, Benefits, Finances and Employment. During the pandemic the service has adapted to provide online virtual support to members of the Armed Forces community.

## **Veterans Connected project**

We launched the Veterans Connected project 2021 following a successful bid for funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund: Forces For Change programme. Through this project Veterans can hire mobile device tablets, headsets, keyboard, and free mobile data. The tablets have been supplied by Centerprise International and are regularly used by veterans in Rhondda Cynon Taf as part of the Veterans Connected Project.

This project has help Veterans to stay in touch with family, and social connections through digital technology, and has helped improve well-being by reducing social isolation. Working in partnership with our neighbouring Council authorities, this project has been delivered across 4 local authorities in South East Wales.

## **Armed Forces Covenant Gold Employer Recognition Award**

In 2022 we successfully retained the Armed Forces Covenant Gold Employer recognition award for its continued support of the Armed Forces community, past and present, and their families. The Council's highly prestigious Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award has been revalidated as the local authority continues to encourage employers and employees to support the Armed Forces and its community and inspire others to do the same.

In January 2022, the Council strengthened its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant by introducing a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Veterans and Reservists. This commitment is to guarantee an interview to any veterans or reservists that meet the essential criteria set out in the job profile for roles that are advertised. The Council recognises that veterans and reservists can bring valuable transferable skills, qualities, and benefits.

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

We worked closely with external parties and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations' to establish a stronger understanding of the number of refugees living in the borough. This included working with social landlords, Valleys Ethnic Minority Support and the University of South Wales. The aim was to identify the number of people seeking sanctuary as well as identifying support that was available, including ESOL classes and friendship groups .

An educational film was produced in partnership with Dr Mike Chick with the support of the Welsh Refugee Council, with the aim of raising awareness of the plight of people seeking sanctuary, as well as increase awareness of the Welsh

Government's, (and more locally the University of South Wales's) commitment to becoming a place of sanctuary for those fleeing persecution or discrimination.

The Summer of 2021 welcomed a number of Afghan families to RCT. Although these families were part of the resettlement scheme, the work involved liaising with groups and community members who worked to support refugees who were not part of the scheme. This again led to increased knowledge of the potential numbers of refugees in RCT who were not part of the scheme. We worked with charity groups, church groups and individual members of the community who sought to make the transition for refugees more manageable.

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

Welsh Government (WG) priorities during 2021-2022 which informed our CfW+ delivery plan, continued to engage with specific customer groups with the aim of meeting the WG target of 20% of our clients gaining employment had a work limiting health condition or disability. 15% of participants achieved at year end, target 20% - actual number of 113 did exceed the target number of 50 due to engagement numbers exceeding target set.

ESF CfW employment support programme specifically targets people who are long term unemployed (12 months+) or economically inactive and young people who are not in education or training. The programme is also geographically targeted to people living in previously designated Communities First areas.

Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 CfW+ engaged with:

1,385 people - 349 young people (25%), 1,038 Adults 25+ (75%)

Ethnicity of participants:

English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British (96%)	1329	Indian	0
Irish	0	Pakistani	0
Gypsy / Traveller / Romany	1	Bangladeshi	1
Dual Heritage - White & Black Caribbean	3	Chinese	0
Dual Heritage - White & Black African	2	African	0
Dual Heritage - White & Asian	4	Caribbean	1
Other White Background	22	Arab	1
Other Dual Heritage Background	1	Any Other Ethnic Group	19

269 (19.4%) of those people engaged were recorded as having a disability or work limiting health condition.

The number of CfW+ clients into employment during 2021-2022 totalled 748 (54% of those engaged), 238 of these clients were young people aged 16-24yrs (32%) and 512 were Adults aged 25+ (68%).

However, if you compare the number of job entries to the number engaged under each age category: (349 young people and 1,038 Adults 25+) 66% of young people and 49% of adults went into employment.

### **Kickstart programme**

At the end of 2021, DWP launched the Kickstart grant funded scheme and RCT Council applied to become a Gateway for that programme, supporting local businesses to access funding and provide paid work placement opportunities to young people.

### **Case Study**

We received a referral for a 22 year old participant with a hearing disability who required support with seeking employment after a long period of mental health issues.

We worked with the participant to update their CV, provided support with writing cover letters and undertook mock interviews to ensure they were prepared. We also researched available support for people entering employment with disabilities and made them aware of funding available through the Access to Work scheme which helps with the costs of any necessary adjustments required in a place of employment.

The participant successfully gained employment.

During their teenage years they suffered complete hearing loss in one ear and 80% loss in the other. This had left them suffering with severe anxiety and depression and more recently had starting self-harming. They received GP support and were referred to the CfW+ program by the Wellbeing Co-ordinator to enable them to access support to gain employment.

They had worked briefly a few months prior to this but the work was unsuitable and having to leave the job had left them feeling even more anxious and depressed and the self-harming had escalated.

We initially met with the participant and their mother at the local Job Centre Plus (JCP) office as telephone contact was not possible due to the hearing disability. We had a lengthy discussion about the barriers faced by the participant. They supplied me with a copy of their CV which detailed extensive qualifications and highlighted their genius level IQ. They stated they lacked confidence to apply for jobs and constantly doubted they could maintain regular employment due to their disability but were determined to try and overcome these barriers.

Our initial meeting established noisy and extremely busy working environments would not be suitable, so we concentrated on administration positions available through the Kickstart scheme.

They expressed interest in vacancies involving outdoor activities as they felt they may benefit their mental health. They agreed to apply for 2 kickstart vacancies so I informed the work coach who sent links to them to begin the application process. At the participants request I drafted a cover letter and condensed their CV to be submitted to Transport for Wales for an IT assistant vacancy. I also informed them about the funding available through the Access to Work scheme which helps with costs related to reasonable adjustments required in a workplace to accommodate employees with disabilities.

Shortly after, they emailed me to confirm an interview had been offered and would be conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams. They were extremely nervous as they had never used Teams before and had never had a formal job interview. I arranged a Teams meeting and drafted a list of interview questions to practice with them a few days prior to the interview. They prepared well and answered all questions clearly and concisely, there were no issues using Teams and they stated they felt much more confident after our session.

Less than 24 hours after the interview the participant confirmed they had secured a job offer which they accepted.

### **Good Practice Shared / Lessons Learned**

Collaborative working with the Job Centre Plus youth work coaches ensured prompt access to relevant Kickstart vacancies.

There is excellent support available for people with disabilities to access to ensure working conditions can be tailored to accommodate any reasonable adjustments that may be required.

## Outcomes

The participant secured a Kickstart position working 25 hours as an IT assistant with Transport for Wales

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Council applies the data set out in the Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) when determining the mix of new schemes/properties that are being built with the use of the social housing grant (SHG). The service continues to apply this method in order to tackle the demand for housing among disabled people, which will

allow them a stable home to enable them to thrive regardless of the barriers they may face. A full review of the LHMA was due to be completed by March 2022, however this has been extended to be completed by December 2022.

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

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

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

As was highlighted in previous Annual Reports, an equality monitoring toolkit has been developed for use by all service areas in the Council. The toolkit has been developed following best practice examples and guidelines, and highlights the importance of equality monitoring and the possible uses for data. The toolkit also contains best practice advice that should be followed when conducting monitoring, including advice on the order of questions, wording and response options. We are hopeful that this toolkit will be published in the Summer of 2022.

In developing the toolkit, we have also been able to give advice and guidance to a number of public-facing service areas on how best to implement or improve equality monitoring in their services. Examples of this include:

- Empty Homes Grant scheme;
- Recruitment forms;
- Theatre booking systems;
- Customer Satisfaction Surveys;
- RCT's Local Access Forum.

Where equality data is collected as part of a grant scheme, this data is reported to Welsh Government as part of their analysis into whether grant funding has been used in line with the programme's requirements.

We have also begun work with the Council's Consultation and Engagement team to ensure that equality monitoring questions and data are routinely collected and used

in public consultations. This work is ongoing and will mean that data is being analysed to better understand the impacts of proposals on residents, and the needs and demands residents have for services.

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

Data regarding the number of individuals registered with Homefinder who required adapted properties was extracted from our Civica system. This has highlighted a large number of applicants who require an accessible or a fully adapted property. Steps will be taken in 2022-2023 to review this data and to use it to inform a task and finish group looking at adapted housing as part of the Allocation Scheme review. This will be an ongoing piece of work which we aim to complete in April 2024. Part of this review will evaluate customer experience of the Homefinder process.

**Action 9 - Improve and develop monitoring of customer complaints.**

This period has continued to provide challenges due to the ongoing impact of Covid and it is unclear as to how this has impacted on some services and customer interaction, with the overall level of customer feedback over the reporting period being significantly less than previous years.

Recorded compliments are consistent with previous years although remain an area for improvement along with improving mechanisms for capturing customer comments which will be a focus for 2022-2023. Work has already begun within service areas to improve how customer comments are captured and how developments and improvements can be fed back as part of the development of 'you said, we did'.

Service areas and Complaints Co-ordinators have throughout the period and despite the presented challenges, continued to effectively manage customer contacts and complaints, although overall complaints handling performance has reduced with the number of Stage 1 complaints being resolved within 10 working days standing at 53%, compared to 61% in 2020-2021.

The number of feedback items received are lower than previous years and remain less than 1.5% of overall customer contacts. Overall, customer contacts to the Council have increased by 0.6% but remain significantly lower than pre-pandemic figures. Numbers of direct telephone contacts to the Council have fallen by 38% in contrast to e-mail and social media contacts which remain higher than pre-pandemic figures and may signify a permanent change in how customers wish to interact with the Council.



The Customer Feedback and Engagement team will continue to monitor customers interaction with the Council to ensure that the Customer Feedback Scheme offers a varied range of options that provide customers opportunity to feedback on services and make suggestions for improvements. The team will also continue to review and consider learning identified by other Councils through Ombudsman case books and direct contact with complaints officers across Wales and through regional and national forums.

Work on the implementation of a new complaints management system has been delayed due to other priorities however it is hoped that this will be fully implemented by April 2023.

The delay in implementation has afforded the opportunity for co-ordinators across all service areas to consider how any new system can best meet the needs of the service and provide improved information from which we can continue to better understand the needs of our communities and improve service delivery.

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

The **Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS)** has continued to utilise a range of methods to deliver youth work services in 2021-2022 including the provision of information advice and assistance to young people to promote their participation and engagement. The table below shows the Youth Engagement and Participation Service's 'reach' (number of individual young people engaged in open access activities organised by, and receiving one to one support from, the service) and the number of contacts the service made with anonymous young people during street based youth work sessions delivered during the year:

<b>Annual reach 2021-2022</b>			
<b>11-13yrs</b>			3240
<b>14-16yrs</b>			2963
<b>17-19yrs</b>			88
<b>20-25yrs</b>			152
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>7235</b>
<b>Number of anonymous contacts 2021-2022</b>			
<b>2021-2022</b>			12930
<b>Reach by age 2021-2022</b>			
	<b>% population</b>	<b>Welsh average</b>	<b>Variance</b>
<b>11-16yrs</b>	36.6%	n/a	n/a
<b>11-19yrs</b>	28.6%	20%	+8.6%

In 2021-2022 the Service engaged with 28.6% of young people aged 11-19yrs, performing 8.6% above the National Welsh Average.

The Council has invested in mobile youth vehicles, utilising core and grant funding to act as hubs in localities where access to a suitable permanent venue is not available. The vehicles are used as mobile youth clubs; as the base for community activities like fun days and street-based youth work; as well as a hub for use at times when an immediate response is required within a community, such as following a serious incident that requires enhanced youth work support. The mobile vehicles proved invaluable during the pandemic, offering a safe space for young people and support for the street-based work.

YEPS uses numerous ways to communicate with young people, parents/carers and community members such as emails, text messaging, posters, leaflets, social media platforms and an app which was launched in 2022. The YEPS website, was rebranded as YEPSWales in 2022 aligning with the new app and continues to provide access information, advice and guidance for young people around a number of themes such as money management, travel etc. The website usage data is monitored monthly with 3,300 users having accessed the website in October 2021 alone. YEPS information is also shared on the Dewis website, Family Information Service website and secondary school websites.

YEPS now also has a Youth Officer solely responsible for developing digitalisation and promotion, supported by a Social Media Champion in each cluster. Young people have been at the heart of the development of the app, which has transformed user engagement and improved service delivery; as well as promoting the service and its activities and support on offer, the app enables parents and guardians to complete consent forms for off-site activities.

The service now has 4 social media platforms, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snap chat with 3,045 Facebook followers, 2,397 Instagram followers and 1,481 Twitter followers in 2021-2022. The YEPS Youtube channel has had 12,574 views in 2021-2022. The service has also live streamed events and meetings with young people, such as those that take place with the County Youth Forum, which have proven successful.

The **Family Information Service** plays a key role in disseminating information to service users and families. Analysis of the online traffic across the Family Information Service social media channel during the pandemic showed a significant engagement in online support with 38,523 views / 32,690 unique viewers of online parenting videos and 44,287 views / 36,040 unique viewers of online early language videos. We have continued to promote the Facebook pages and videos this year and the online parenting and early language videos have increased by 9,000 views in the period April 2021-April 2022.

This informs us that social media is still a popular channel to access parenting support and we aim to create more informative videos for both Facebook and the new RCT Families Website. The Virtual Parenting Support Officer is responsible for building appropriate online content to ensure that all families will have access to the same support, advice, and guidance from the Parenting Team irrespective of the method of delivery removing any barriers to inclusion and engagement.

Work on the **RCT Families Website** has continued with the website due to be launched in the summer of 2022. This single public facing website will be a one stop shop for information related to children, young people and families.

It will provide an important single point of access for information, advice and signposting for children, young people, parents, community members and practitioners to the range of support on offer, providing the means for members of the public to meet their own information advice and assistance needs.

The new delivery model for **Parenting** that commenced September 2021 has been implemented well with informal parenting support and formal parenting programmes providing information and support being delivered by a range of commissioned partners throughout RCT. This is supported by a spot purchasing commissioning model utilising approved suppliers. In establishing approved supplier lists to support the spot purchasing of parenting support provision, the Commissioning Team have been developing sustainable procurement of local community-based groups to support the Council to meet the needs of families within their own communities. This supports the principles of both the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

The three **Children and Family Centres** re-opened fully in 2021-2022 following the pandemic offering a focal point in the community for access to information advice and assistance in relation to family support, childcare, parenting, play and youth services.

The YEP service has been proactive in **consulting with young people** throughout the year. From seeking opinions during 1:1 sessions to surveys on social media platforms, YEPS staff have been committed to listening to young people to inform service developments. The Your Voice survey is due to be undertaken in the Autumn 2022.

The Participation strategy for the YEP Service has been redeveloped as a result of feedback from young people involved in our **Youth Forum** work. The feedback has resulted in the locality fora being replaced with thematic area fora. These include:

- Equality & Diversity
- Community Safety

- Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Environment & Sustainability

Young people believe these groups will have a greater impact on the work they can achieve and that these thematic areas tackle the greatest needs for 11–25 year olds across RCT.

## **Details of Forum work undertaken in 2021-2022**

### Equality & Diversity

This forum is now well established with good numbers attending forum meetings. The voices of young people have contributed to several key developments/projects, such as:

- An RCT wide survey indicated the desire for safe social spaces for LGBTQ+ young people, which resulted in the creation of a new LGBTQ+ forum; this subsequently led to the establishment of a support group in Aberdare Community School and weekly drop-in sessions at Cynon Linc
- Project work as part of a Pride Art competition
- A Sexual Health workshop in partnership with Cwm Taf Health Board
- Working with Lili Pad to create a short film about LGBTQ+ experiences across RCT, which was showcased to Stonewall and partners.

### Community Safety

- Members of the Community Safety group attended The Police and Crime Commissioners Young Voices Regional Forum to hear feedback about how their suggestions are being put into action, i.e., more methods of contacting the police through texting for example, discussions of the importance of body language and developing positive relationships between the police and young people. Forum members worked with police, the police and crime commissioner and other partners to identify better ways of working with the police, identifying areas causing concern such as knife crime, young people reporting crimes and knowing your rights
- As part of this forum, young people wrote a poem with Safer Wales and external poet about Covid
- Forum members have been heavily involved in Interlink and Safer Wales consultations which have been successful and enjoyed by young people.

## Mental Health & Wellbeing

- Forum members voiced the importance of raising awareness of mental health issues and the possibility of creating promotional material advising of coping strategies. Consequently, the forum focused on carrying out consultations with other young people regarding a mental health animation project which is currently underway and due to be completed in April 2023.
- Young people nominated YEPS for an award which they won: Mental Health and Wellbeing Award, Community Saints: Youth Development Award.

## Environment & Sustainability

- Environment and Sustainability group had a successful day during October half term doing a litter pick in Ynysangharad Park. 20 young people took part as they highlighted this as an area where young people like to gather and can “create a mess”. They wanted to “give something back” to the area and took part in a litter pick for 2 and a half hours
- The YEPS leader for this forum sits on Climate Change Working group as the representative from YEPS, whereby they attend quarterly meetings with other employees from across the Council who feed back any work and information they have on environmentally positive and sustainable work going on throughout the county borough. YEPS’ presence in this group is to feedback the work of the forum and provide a voice from young people, whilst helping with engagement of young people in any consultations other departments of the Council may want/need.

## **OBJECTIVE 2 – To reduce inequalities that exist within our communities**

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

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

Work to improve the recruitment process has been completed, although much work was delayed due to Covid priorities and the new iTrent HR and Payroll system implementation, which includes a new e-recruitment system.

In particular, key actions on hold include:

- New manager recruitment guidance which includes information on recruitment and diversity. A draft guidance document has been produced, it will need to

be reviewed following the build of the new recruitment system and amended accordingly. Recruitment system guidance will also be produced.

- Streamlining of recruitment processes as the new system may impact key processes. The review to streamline recruitment processes is on hold until the system goes live, some work towards this may be undertaken as required as part of the new recruitment system build.

Key aspects of the recruitment plan which have been implemented include the [recruitment website/microsite](#) going live and the recruitment of a Graduate Officer to specialise in recruitment marketing to ensure that more people are aware of our job vacancies. They will support service areas with recruitment marketing, including utilising social media for advertising and promotion, along with developing a strong employer brand to attract candidates.

Other pilots relating to the plan have had some success, for example increasing return of exit interviews in Children's Social Services to help gather data to aid staff retention and a recent marketing campaign implemented March 2022, led by Children's Social Services to recruit social workers.

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

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

### **Action 3 - The implementation of the Develop, Invest and Grow project to improve Well-being and equality and diversity outcomes in over 100 small medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Rhondda Cynon Taf.**

Staying Well at Work (formerly Develop Invest & Grow) led by RCT and part funded by the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government and aims to provide support to small businesses and their employees. The support is offered at no cost and focusses on a bespoke range of products to improve employee Health and Wellbeing and businesses to manage employees with disabilities/work limiting health conditions.

The Project sought to re-profile early on in its delivery due to initial delays in its start-up and this was to be considered following a period of 12 months delivery to allow time for the Project to recover in line with the agreed targets.

In February 2020 Rhondda Cynon Taf was affected by Storm Dennis and in March 2020, the worldwide Covid pandemic created unprecedented challenges and as a direct result all re-profile requests were further delayed.

Consequently, it is evident that the Project will not recover to such a point as to be in line with the WEFO approved business plan and as such preliminary financial impact assessments have been completed internally to RCTCBC.

Given this, a new structure and delivery model was proposed which sought to deliver the service change and revised outputs in light of the continued Covid pandemic and the impact that has had on the projects ability to engage and meet the project targets.

- Service review was implemented with effect from 2 April 2021.
- All operations were moved to a combination of virtual, RCT building locations and Community hubs for delivery.
- Employee participant appointments continue to be delivered via video platforms and telephone, where client digital access is limited.
- Employee participant face to face interventions have continued and increased since April and as restrictions have eased.

#### **The outcomes delivered**

Over the course of the project, to the end of March 2022, 120 SME participants have enrolled with the project, 104 have been through internal compliance checks and are

eligible for the project, 16 have been compliance rejected and are therefore ineligible for the project.

72 SME enterprises received direct support from the project, up until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 to encourage a cultural change in organisations towards a more diverse and healthier workforce and the adoption of flexible working practices.

Employers were supported to improve flexibility within the workplace and encouraged to adopt flexible work practices, as well as adopting or improving equality and diversity strategies and monitoring systems. Activities with employers includes promoting the benefits a healthy workplace can bring to an organisation, addressing health related issues within the workforce and develop or improve appropriate work place or occupational health programmes.

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

72 participants have completed the project and recorded outcomes against the project indicators, of which 29 were early leavers, and 3 are still actively engaged in the project.

**Table 1a**

01. Adoption or improvement of HR and Health & Safety Policy that supports and monitors attendance and wellbeing in the workplace	42
02. Adoption or improvement of an Absence Management Policy	30
03. Adoption or improvement of Equalities and Diversity Policies and/or procedures in place which make reference to the Equality Act 2010	42
04. Adoption or improvement of systems and/or procedures that support flexibility in the	7
05. Adoption or Improvement of Assessments and/or Monitoring Systems in place to support the Health and Wellbeing of <u>Staff</u> ?	5
06. Adoption or Improvement of policy, procedure or intervention that supports health, work and wellbeing of employees.	45
07. Has the business adopted or improved systems to monitor the impact of work on health, for e.g. ergonomic assessment, health surveillance)?	2
08. Does the business now have training in place to promote health awareness and wellbeing	14
Early Leaver	29
No Outcome Recorded Yet	3



## **Workplace Health programmes**

A total of 14 virtual Workplace health programmes and awareness training sessions and workshops were delivered during this period. These included topics such as Health & Wellbeing, Living and Working with Menopause and Conducting Investigations in the Workplace.

## **Employee Participant Activity**

The support offered to participants has been more holistic and continues to be so, more in-depth and over a longer period of time than expected and as a consequence the impact on participants have been more far reaching and likely to have greater longevity as a result.

The project was designed to support mild/moderate conditions such as anxiety, however in reality, during delivery it quickly became apparent that participants have presented with far more complex issues than anticipated and the interventions provided by the clinical team has responded to this need.

Consequently, the duration of the client intervention period continues to be longer – the project was envisioned as a provider of short-term interventions, but many have engaged longer-term and accessed multiple interventions to deal with different issues.

Over the course of the project, to 31 March 2022, 444 employee participants have enrolled with the project.

329 employee Participants have engaged with the project to date. Of those, internal verification checks were completed and 192 have returned to work, 100 have remained in work. Of the 63 early leavers, in the main, intervention took place and participants returned to work or remained in work but failed to complete closure project paperwork. The reasons for referral are detailed below in Table 1b and a breakdown of the outcomes recorded are detailed below in Table 1c.

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

**Table 1b Reason for Referral**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>%</b>
In Work Support	125	38%
Support Ret. to Work -28 Days	43	13%
Support Ret. to Work 28 Days+	161	49%
<b>Total</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 1c Outcome**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>%</b>
Early Leaver	63	19%
NO-RTW 4 weeks after completion	18	5%
Remained in Work	100	30%
RTW - Different	3	1%
RTW - Same	142	43%
RTW 4 wks after completion	3	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 1d Characteristic Summary**

	<b>2021-2022 Cumulative Total</b>	
<b>Participant Breakdown</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Disabled/Disability	70	17.3%
Work Limiting Condition (Includes MSD & MH)	334	82.7%
Female	310	76.7%
Male	94	23.3%
Care / Child Responsibilities	116	28.7%
Over 54	158	39.1%
Migrant / Non EU	0	0.0%
BME	4	1.0%
Total Referrals	<b>404</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

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

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

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

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

During 2021-2022 work continued towards meeting Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 web accessibility standards.

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

Through our Digital Strategy we are seeking to ensure that services are fully inclusive, easy to use and that no-one who wishes to participate is left behind. The Well-being and Future Generations Act – A more Equal Wales being a key driver for digital inclusion.

We provide opportunities for people within our communities and organisation to develop their digital competency, confidence and where necessary provide access to assisted digital support, so that they are better equipped to access and use technology productively. We will support all to become more confident to safely use technology and effectively adopt new ways of doing things.

Examples include:

- Working with our partners we supported the Cwm Taf Morgannwg MASH with a digital solution to manage referrals.
- Implementing a more joined up way for businesses to apply and provide evidence for business grants.
- As part of the Welsh Government's 'Hwb' digital Transformation Project, we made sure that every school was able to deliver the requirements for digital skills at the heart of the new curriculum through installing new IT systems and equipment, continuing to support ongoing work in relation to Schools digital strategy.
- Supporting the digital skills and inclusion agenda, with ICT & Digital playing a key role in supporting key initiatives such as Digital Bitesize, ['Digital Fridays'](#) and [Get online in RCT](#).
- Supporting access to digital, we provide free Public Wi-Fi at approximately 90 Council and community buildings and also at our key [town centres](#). Public access PCs are available at several locations such as Libraries, Leisure & Community Centres. All PCs within Libraries were refreshed with new devices during 2021-2022.

- Our website is continually being adapted to meet accessibility standards, including supporting those with visual impairment, content is scanned for errors and reports produced to facilitate their correction. Work to ensure the website meets accessibility [WCAG 2.1 AA compliance](#) is also in progress. Our website accessibility rating has increased from 68% to 86% in 2021 and to 96% in 2022 on our Corporate Web presence. All new content is evaluated to ensure that accessibility standards are met prior to release.

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

This action will be addressed as part of the Allocation Scheme Review. A Task and Finish Group will be set up to look at Equality and Diversity. This group will review the current application to ensure it is accessible and that the data captured informs best practice.

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

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

Gateway to Employment

In partnership with Coleg Y Cymoedd and Elite – we have worked with individuals with additional learning and physical needs providing supportive placements within the council. 6 currently on placement within the council. 1 secured employment within RCT Council and 1 secured employment with private organisation.

Access to Employment

This programme provides 12 months employed status programme for individuals furthest away from the labour market. 8 engaged on programme, 4 secured employment with the Council and 4 still on programme.

Step in the Right Direction

This 2 year traineeship programme is for Children Looked After.

2021-2022:

- 11 Trainees started on the programme
- 5 Employment outcomes (3 with RCT Council and 2 external employers)
- 10 Trainees undertook and successfully completed training

### Care2work

This engagement programme is for Children Looked After:

- 136 referrals
- 22 secured employment
- 10 completed Training
- 4 started volunteering

### Kickstart

Working in partnership with DWP we coordinate RCT Council internal kickstart placements. The Kickstart scheme was government funded and its aim was to provide 16-24 year olds at risk of becoming long term unemployed, the opportunity of 6 months paid work experience.

Outcomes:

- Interviewed over 100 eligible candidates
- Established 40 placement opportunities with RCT Council
- Successfully recruited 23 kickstart employees
- To date 50% of starters have secured employment.

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

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

The Equality Impact Assessment documentation was reviewed to take into account the requirements of the Socio-economic Duty. As part of this review there was an opportunity to strengthen both the Equality Impact Assessment and Welsh Language Impact Assessment. A combined approach was taken to relaunch the impact assessment guidance. In addition a new process 'The Review Panel' was established to strengthen the scrutiny of completed impact assessments.

Senior officers from across the Council sit on the Review Panel to review the impact assessment, checking that relevant data and evidence have been used to inform decision making. 7 Review Panels were held during 2021-2022 reviewing a number of high-levels strategies including the Digital Strategy and Education Strategic Plan. Feedback from the Review Panels has been positive enabling opportunities for learning and good practice to be shared.

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

All [Catering Services web pages](#) have been updated to promote the uptake of eFSM with easy access hyperlinks for application. The Council's media team have shared social media messages promoting eFSM take-up.

School dinner menus have been adapted to encourage take up by extending choice to appeal to all tastes – this includes 'grab and go' and vegetarian options. Bespoke special diets have been created to ensure eFSM pupils with specific dietary requirements are not disadvantaged and cannot take up the meal. The importance of protection of anonymity has been reinforced throughout the Catering Services workforce which help with breaking down barriers/stigma to application.

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

Prosperity and Development's Service Delivery Plan sets out a number of key service priorities for 2021-2022, one of which includes to:

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

In supporting the delivery of local economic activities whilst promoting social inclusivity the Council have continued to engage with a variety of groups and stakeholders in delivering new projects and initiatives across our town centres and to seek their views on implementing appropriate and timely measures.

1. The Council engaged in early informal consultation to help inform a draft "Regeneration Strategy for Aberdare Town Centre". The exercise sought the views and opinions of a wide range of stakeholders from within Aberdare town centre and the wider communities it serves. In identifying and defining the town's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities and drawing upon local knowledge, such engagement ensures that local people have an opportunity

to shape and focus interventions aimed at addressing issues affecting them most. Early involvement also helps to foster a sense of local ownership and commitment to the successful implementation of the Strategy.

2. The Council delivered a comprehensive exercise to “Engage the Community in Porth” in an exercise to explore the potential for collaborative actions between business and with other stakeholders, including the Council, cultural and community organisations, town centre users and property owners. The exercise explored a social and cultural regeneration approach that supports the existing and more physically focused Porth Town Centre Regeneration Strategy adopted by the Council in 2018, to deliver a more holistically focused regeneration approach. The exercise has delivered a new “Opportunity Porth” stakeholder group and a series of milestones to inform future priorities for the group that will benefit the town and the wider communities it serves.
3. The Council delivered a series of Christmas Events within 5 of its 8 town centres and worked collaboratively with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and Town and Community Councils to deliver an event in the 3 remaining town centres. The events provided individuals and families with an affordable festive celebration and delivered increased town centre footfall to support local businesses. The events were supported by free car parking in all Council town centre car parks and were well attended and positively received.
4. The Council have continued to work collaboratively with business groups and other stakeholders to deliver a range of projects and community focused events across our town centres. These include working collaboratively with the Our Aberdare BID to deliver a Summer programme of activities throughout Aberdare town centre and with the Love Treorchy BID to deliver the town’s first Food & Drink Festival. Additional projects have delivered seasonal town centre floral displays, promotional videos and festive lighting.
5. The Council’s Town Centre Team and Employment, Education & Training Team worked collaboratively with the Love Treorchy BID to deliver a pilot programme that provided a number of work placement opportunities for Children Looked After throughout Treorchy town centre. The programme, which supports the Council’s commitment as a Corporate Parent was well received and delivered many benefits for both the young people and businesses that took part. The programme will be extended into other town centres in 2023.

### **OBJECTIVE 3 – TO PROMOTE SAFE COMMUNITIES**

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

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

The Crown Prosecution Service defines a Hate Crime as:

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

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

During 2021, 686 hate crimes were recorded in the Cwm Taf area (Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil). The tables below show the breakdown across the 5 characteristics, area and month:

**Table 1a. Hate Crimes by characteristic**

Disability	84
Race	332
Religion	47
Sexual Orientation	182
Transgender	38

**Table 1b. Hate Crimes by area**

Rhondda	198
Cynon	150
Taf	167
Merthyr	171



**Table 1c. Hate Crimes by month (2019)**

January	27
February	43
March	49
April	53
May	45
June	79
July	77
August	41
September	44
October	48
November	65
December	39

### **Tackling Hate Crime in Rhondda Cynon Taf**

We have continued to work closely with partner agencies including South Wales Police (SWP). Increased partnership working has enabled us to ensure that residents get a positive and consistent response. The Hate Crime Strategy was renewed and developed to reflect the shift in approach that had to be made during the pandemic. The Strategy is currently being reviewed to reflect current, (post pandemic) ways of working.

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

A Cwm Taf Morgannwg Modern Day Slavery (MDS) group has been established. Previously the MDS agenda sat within the Serious Organised Crime Group, which sits within the Community Safety Partnership meeting structure. There is currently an ongoing review of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Community Safety Partnership Board which this group would sit under.

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

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

#### **Action 4 - Pilot the PERMA model in secondary schools.**

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

According to Seligman's PERMA model:

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

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

The PERMA tool is now being used across 95 schools in RCT and recent updates have allowed schools to create bespoke wellbeing groups and to also use a "mood tracker" to monitor emotional changes in pupils over time.

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

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

- Analyse the data from schools and identify patterns and trends and provide information to schools to ensure they are prepared to be responsive to trends.

- Have a specific focus on accurate recording of prejudice-related incidents to enable monitoring of patterns and prevent discrimination to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Monitor equality data and advise schools on local trends.

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

Governing bodies should monitor:

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

We have completed a recent bullying survey with 1850 secondary aged pupils in RCT. The findings are being analysed and will be used to inform actions across the Authority.

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

Identifying domestic abuse at the earliest opportunity is key to keeping people safe. Our programmes provide an accessible service based within the local community to support those who have experienced or are currently experiencing domestic violence and are identified through risk assessment or Public Protection Notices (PPN) as low to medium risk. Programmes aim to increase the opportunities available to victims of domestic violence by implementing early intervention and prevention strategies. The

services provided by the project build capacity by increasing the service user's skills to identify the early warning signs of abusive behaviours within current or future relationships, increase their confidence and self-esteem and reduce isolation.

<b>Course</b>	<b>Attendance 2021-2022</b>
Freedom programme	129
Hope 2 recovery	40
Wellbeing	23
Recovery toolkit	30

### Male victims

The programmes received 907 referrals but did not receive many male referrals during the period 2021-2022. We did have 15 male referrals, but they were supported by our lottery funded project in the Rhondda.

### LGBTQ

The programmes supported 35 individuals who identified as LGBTQ+ during 2021-2022.

### One to one

The Programmes provided 527 telephone support sessions and 210 drop in / face-to-face sessions. This was provided to individuals who needed tailored support not provided by group sessions.

### Online

Online groups were implemented during Covid restrictions and local lockdowns but proved an effective method to engage with those with poor mental health (anxiety, depression, agoraphobia) and physical disabilities. Courses also reduced the financial costs of transport to attend groups and childcare issues.

### Outcomes

- 100% stated they were able to recognise the early warning signs of abusive behaviour and felt they had increased ability to keep safe within their relationships.
- 100% stated that they felt increased confidence in their ability to create a safe environment for themselves and their family.

- 75% stated an increased knowledge of appropriate agencies from which they could receive support for their emotional and physical well-being.
- 95% stated they felt an increase in their confidence and self-esteem because of attending the sessions.

#### **OBJECTIVE 4 – TO REDUCE THE GENDER PAY GAP**

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

#### **The Gender Pay Gap**

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

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

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

The Equal Pay Audit identified the following Equal Pay gaps:

#### **2022**

	Combined	Full Time	Part Time
All Employees	10.24%	-9.61%	3.63%
Non Teaching	11.68%	-8.96%	2.98%
Teaching	4.19%	3.91%	5.05%

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

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

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

The existing performance review process has been reviewed. Moving forward, the corporate process will be improved by ensuring that all corporate staff who have worked for the Council for 12 months or more will have received an annual performance review. The previous approach of rolling out the review a staff tier at a time was not effective as operationally, a rollout to all staff was never achieved.

Following the implementation of the new HR/Payroll system - iTrent, all managers will be expected to conduct reviews with their staff (in line with the Council's Training, Learning and Development Policy) and record compliance on the iTrent system, allowing for compliance to be monitored centrally. Previously service areas have been undertaking reviews outside the corporate process but there was no central/corporate monitoring mechanism. The Individual Performance Review cycle will align with the Council's Performance cycle and start on 1<sup>st</sup> April each year, ending on 31<sup>st</sup> March. It is anticipated this roll out will take place from April 2023, once the iTrent system has been fully embedded across the Council.

Guidance and templates for the Individual Performance Reviews will be created and available on the Council's RCT Source. The Chief Officer and Grade 15 Individual Performance Review Template will still be available, other staff will have a more generic template. There will also be training and briefings to launch the improved process.

HR staff are currently consulting with key service areas, with a focus on frontline services (due to a higher ratio of staff to managers and many staff not being on email), to understand their needs to support them with undertaking reviews and to increase engagement.

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

We launched and delivered our Women into Leadership programme, which was a series of themed events and follow-up panel discussions focusing on specific topics. Each event was themed and took delegates on a journey from recognising the 'new normal' that many in society now find themselves in, specifically leading virtually and the challenges this has brought through to dispelling barriers and myths that have inhibited women progressing previously. The programme then moved onto recognising the specific skills and perspectives that women have to offer and how they can contribute to senior level teams, decisions and projects with the final

component of the series covering what drives successful women when they have reached the pinnacle of their career.

The programme aimed to provide a platform for women throughout the Council, regardless of role or job grade to embrace the unique skills and perspectives women can bring to the work environment. Feedback received indicates that the programme has been both inspiring and empowering, with more women in the organisation feeling able to develop themselves to break the 'glass ceiling'. Already, the programme has contributed to some mentoring relationships being established, discussion continuing and informed some strategic priorities for the People Development Team such as developing formal coaching and mentoring programmes and implementing a formal process for staff to access senior leadership for their development by gaining experiential learning. It has also raised some unexpected yet important things to consider, such as how we may be able to better understand and support staff who identify outside of the gender binary.

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

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

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

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

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

### **OBJECTIVE 5 – TO CREATE AN INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE**

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

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

Work commenced on this project this year, initially focusing on research on good practice in the area. We have established a task and finish group to identify key actions and stakeholders. We are looking at preparing a staff survey to be circulated within 2022-2023 and we aim to have a policy and/or toolkit later in 2023.

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

This action shifted its focus as the service had to reprioritise its delivery in response to the Covid pandemic. Therefore, a number of staff wellbeing initiatives were introduced which focus on mental health:

- Connect 5 - a programme that is designed to provide practical tools to enable everyone to have a conversation on mental health. Connect 5 was identified and piloted on a number of groups as a support for mental health. This has been evaluated as a programme and we hope to rollout further as a Cwm Taf delivery model.
- Cari - an artificial intelligence system that enables staff to assess their own wellbeing score confidentially and provides a number of supports. This system enables the organisation to target specific interventions based on the data and provides an overall wellbeing score as an organisation.
- Wellbeing bitesize sessions have been developed and delivered on a range of topics such as sleep, menopause, anxiety, finances, wellbeing, women and mens health etc, these are evaluated individually. We utilise data from Cari, staff surveys, sickness trends and national research to develop these sessions.
- Carefirst is an employee assistance programme that delivers a range of wellbeing activities, including 24/7 access to in the moment support, an advice centre for financial and legal rights issues, website for online support and information on many health conditions, weekly webinars and an app that staff can use to monitor their mental health and gain interventions to support.
- Bespoke school counselling service.
- A staff Wellbeing helpline was introduced.
- Self-referrals for mental health and physiotherapy
- Elected member wellbeing sessions.



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

Work on this project is progressing with projected completion in Spring 2023. 9 identified bilingual e-Learning, Dignity at Work, Disability and Discrimination, Diversity & Inclusion in the Workplace, Equality Act 2010, LGBTQIA+/Trans Awareness, Neurodiversity Awareness, Race Awareness, Reasonable Adjustments and Unconscious Bias modules have been created and will be piloted with staff, managers and staff networks. The internal learning and development platform 'RCT Source' will support the training material. Additional non digital resources will then be created to support 'Offline' learning through presented instruction and physical handouts for service areas that have limited access to IT systems.

### **Action 4 - Become more disability confident as an organisation.**

The Council continue to be a Level 2 Disability Confident employer under the ['Disability Confident'](#) scheme. We have continued to work towards providing more accessible services for residents and customers, and supporting our disabled staff in the workplace. Part of this action has been developing staff awareness through training and awareness articles and signposting. Examples of this include:

- Developing and delivering 'digital accessibility' training to various teams across the authority, including the Communities for Work Plus (CfW+) Adult Education team.
- Working with the Business Disability Forum (BDF) to work towards becoming Disability Smart. The criteria for Disability Smart align with the 'Disability Confident' scheme so will allow us to progress in this scheme too.
- The Council are also members of the BDF and have worked with our Human Resources team to signpost the BDF helpline and resources and training available.

In March 2022 the [Autism Wales](#) Autism Awareness training was also approved for a trial with our Human Resources team starting in April 2022. If successful, the training will then be rolled out to all service areas across the Council, including to Elected Members and the Councils Senior Leadership Team.

We have also begun initial actions and work to develop our external Disability Forum to ensure it is sustainable and most effective for members. The Disability Forum is a positive space open to all residents of RCT with a disability, caring responsibility or an interest in disability issues in RCT. The Forum is a place for members to bring any concerns or questions they have to Council officers.

### **Action 5 - Undertake workplace equality monitoring.**

As outlined in previous reports, an equality monitoring toolkit has been developed for all services in the Council to use. The toolkit highlights the importance of equality monitoring, the possible uses for data and best practice that should be followed when conducting monitoring. We are hopeful that this internal toolkit will be published in the Summer of 2022.

Following its implementation in late 2021, best practice equality monitoring fields have now been added to the new HR and Payroll system. These new fields mean that staff have the opportunity to be fully represented in their HR data, and gives the Council an opportunity to collect data on characteristics like non-binary identities, ethnicity and more. Following this implementation of new data fields, there will be a drive to obtain up-to-date staff information in Spring 2022.

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

In 2021-2022 the Council marked a number of significant days either by raising awareness through articles and blogs on its internal intranet and with staff networks or by holding awareness raising events. Articles were written about the following, they appear in date order:

- Stephen Lawrence Day
- Lesbian Visibility Day
- Deaf Awareness Week
- International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia
- Carers Week
- Windrush Day
- World Mental Health Day
- Baby Loss Awareness Week
- International Pronouns Day
- World Menopause Day
- Black History Month
- Trans Awareness Week

- Carers Rights Day
- International Day of People with Disabilities
- International Women's Day
- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- Transgender Day of Visibility

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

### **LGBTQIA+ inclusion**

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

In consultation with our LGBTQ+ staff network, we have looked at language around LGBTQ+ issues and adopted a new acronym as the staff network felt it would be more inclusive and welcoming to members of the community. The new acronym includes Intersex and Asexual people, making the new acronym used across Council documentation, LGBTQIA+.

We have also introduced, in a voluntary capacity, the use of pronouns in emails and presentations. This can send a powerful message of institutional inclusivity when viewed by members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

We have offered webinars and free events to our staff in relation to Bi Visibility and other LGBTQIA+ topics and shared resources, linking in with other authorities when relevant to increase awareness and committing to the larger LGBTQIA+ community in South Wales.

We are key partners of the Proud Councils partnership and through the works held during the pandemic, including online seminars, we have increased membership to the group with Powys County Council joining and we are talking to two other authorities about their membership.

In August 2021, Proud Councils ran a competition for young people aged 11-18 across Wales on the theme “Becoming Me” or “How adults can be allies of young LGBT+ people”.

### **Menopause Cafes**

Virtual Menopause cafes were launched and provide a space to learn more about menopause and what it’s like to experience it. The cafes provide a space to discuss menopause problems and symptoms, and tips and solutions to help manage these.

### **Race Equality**

As a Council, we recognised we needed to do more to further race equality in the workplace. During 2021-2022, we held a number of events to highlight Black history and improve cultural competence. These included:

- Black History and Beyond series exploring a number of areas such local Black history, Colonialism and racism.
- Windrush – an exploration of the Windrush generation
- A performance at Pontypridd Library of ‘Call Mr Robeson’ - By Tayo Aluko and friends.

In March 2022, Cabinet agreed to the Council signing the [BITC’s Race at Work](#) Charter. This demonstrates the Council’s commitment improving equality of opportunity in the workplace.

### **Senior Diversity Champions**

In 2021 Senior Diversity Champions were appointed to further diversity and inclusion in the workplace. These are:

Chris Bradshaw Chief Executive	Race Equality
Dave Powell Director of Corporate Estates	Disability Inclusion
Gaynor Davies Director of Education	Gender Equality
Simon Gale Director of Prosperity and Development	LGBTQIA+ Inclusion

All champions have met with respective staff network members and participated in events and question and answer sessions as well as being a visible presence to promote equality and diversity.

## **Staff Networks**

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

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

In May 2021 we held a Staff Networks Day event where a number of guest speakers came to talk to staff network members on the theme of togetherness. A number of themes were explored on the day including:

- Being an Ally: Moving into action
- Defining Black in Unison
- ENFYS – Cardiff University LGBTQ+ staff network.

## **White Ribbon**

White Ribbon Day 2021 was marked in Rhondda Cynon Taf with a Candlelit Vigil held in Pontypridd town centre to remember every woman and girl who have lost their lives as a result of male violence.

The vigil, which took place outside the Council's Llys Cadwyn buildings in Taff Street, was organised in partnership with the local authority, emergency services, Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board and third sector domestic abuse support organisations and trade unions.

We also held a number of virtual sessions with staff to highlight awareness of the ['Signal for Help'](#). The Signal for Help had been prominent on social media and it was important to raise awareness to ensure our staff knew how to support appropriately if a Signal for Help was observed.

## **Overall Progress**

The Council continues to make significant progress in many of the equality objectives. As a consequence of the pandemic, much positive and innovative work has been done to improve the accessibility and inclusion of the services we provide across the borough.

Our work to deliver equality objectives contained in our Strategic Equality Plan helps us to demonstrate how we are contributing to [a more equal Wales](#) - 'a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances'. It also seeks to support all the well-being goals including a Wales of Cohesive Communities and a Prosperous Wales.

## **7. Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's)**

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

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

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

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

The table below includes a snapshot of EIA's carried out in 2021-2022.

## Equality Impact Assessments

<b>Policy/Procedure</b>	<b>Date</b>
21st Century Schools Programme - Proposals to improve education provision for Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llyn-y-Forwyn	June 2021
21st Century Schools Programme - Proposals to reorganise primary schools, secondary schools and sixth form provision in the greater Pontypridd area	June 2021
Welsh in Education Strategic Plan	July 2021
21st Century Schools and Colleges programme – Mutual Investment Model (MIM) - update	July 2021
Proposals to establish primary education provision for the Llanilid housing development	July 2021
Unadopted roads	September 2021
Rhondda Cynon Taf Tourism Strategy	September 2021
Update report on electric vehicle charging strategy & implementation plan	November 2021
21st century schools programme – Proposals to improve English medium primary education provision for Glyncoch, Tonysguboriau and Maesybryn	December 2021
Consultation outcomes on the Education and Inclusion Service's draft strategic plan 2021-2024	December 2021
Review of learning support class provision for pupils with significant additional learning needs	December 2021
Regional employability framework	December 2021
Guidance for unpaid carers in the workplace	January 2022
Council fees and charges policy 2022-2023	February 2022
The Council's 2022-2023 revenue budget	February 2022
Consultation on the proposal to enhance Welsh medium learning support class provision for pupils with significant additional learning needs	March 2022
Library strategy and action plan 2022-2025	March 2022
Digital strategy 2022-2026	March 2022

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

<https://rctcbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1&LLL=0>

## **8. Employment Monitoring Data**

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

- people employed by the authority on 31 March each year by protected characteristic;
- men and women employed, broken down by:
  - job;
  - grade (where grading system in place);
  - pay;
  - contract type (including permanent and fixed term contracts);
  - working pattern (including full-time, part-time and other flexible working patterns).
- people who have applied for jobs with the authority over the last year;
- employees who have applied to change position within the authority; identifying how many were successful in their application and how many were not;
- employees who have applied for training and how many succeeded in their application;
- employees who completed training;
- employees involved in grievance procedures either as a complainant or as a person against whom a complaint was made;
- employees subject to disciplinary procedures;
- employees who have left an authority's employment.

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

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



## 9. Procurement

The Council operates the SPD (Single Procurement Document) which is part of the [National Procurement Website](#).

The SPD is a standard form, which replaces pre-qualification questionnaires, and should make the process of bidding for a public contract easier and contains a set of core questions commonly asked at the selection stage.

The SPD delivers a number of benefits:

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

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

## 10. Accessible Information

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

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

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

## **11. Future Work**

We will work towards further embedding and achieving the actions as outlined in the Strategic Equality Plan Action Plan 2019-2022. Next year it will be important that we continue to respond to emerging issues as a result of the Covid pandemic and review the recommendations in Welsh Government's draft Race Equality Action Plan.

## **12. Contact Details**

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

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

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

Telephone: 01443 444531

email: [equality@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:equality@rctcbc.gov.uk)

### **Employment Monitoring Data**

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

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

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

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

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

### **People Employed by Protected Characteristic**

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

## **EQUALITY MONITORING DATA FOR THE YEAR 2021-2022**

### **Gender**

The table below shows the gender breakdown of employees:

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Workforce</b>
Male	2825	25.9%
Female	8099	74.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10924</b>	<b>100%</b>

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

### **Age**

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

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Workforce</b>
16-24	818	7.5%
25-34	2019	18.5%
35-44	2618	23.9%
45-54	2989	27.4%
55-64	2165	19.8%
65+	315	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10924</b>	<b>100%</b>

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

### **Disability**

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

<b>Identification</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Workforce</b>
Disabled	255	2.3%
Non Disabled	9007	82.5%
Prefer not to say	15	0.1%
Information not held	1647	15.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10924</b>	<b>100%</b>

Information is held on almost 85% of employees. A small percentage of employees have indicated that they are disabled but this is unlikely to give the true picture of disability in the workplace. Although the staff equality profile questionnaire gives the definition of disability, some employees with a 'defined' disability may not identify as having a disability.

## National Identity and Ethnicity

The table below shows the breakdown of employees by ethnicity:

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Number</b>
Asian	6
Asian Bangladeshi	1
Asian British	9
Asian Chinese	4
Asian Cornish	1
Asian Indian	3
Asian Other	5
Asian Pakistani	2
Black	2
Black African	12
Black British	2
Black Other	2
Chinese	4
Gypsy/Romany/ Irish Traveller	1
Mixed Other	11
Mixed White & African	3
Mixed White & Asian	9
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	11
Not Known	42
Other Ethnic Group	28
Prefer Not To Say	20
White	3845
White - British	2780
White - Cornish	1
White - English	60
White - Irish	9
White - Northern Irish	1
White - Other	17
White - Scottish	7
White - Welsh	2293
Not Known	1733
<b>Total</b>	<b>10924</b>

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

<b>National Identity</b>	<b>Number of Employees</b>
African	1
American	1
Any other Asian background	2
Any other Mixed background	2
Any other White background	6
Australian	2
Bangladeshi	1
British	1699
British Virgin Islands	1
Burundi	1
Canadian	1
Chinese	7
Croatian	1
Dutch	1
English	191
European	11
German	1
Greek	2
Indian	4
Irish	16
Nigeria	2
Northern Ireland	1
Norwegian	1
Other	2
Polish	8
Portuguese	2
Romanian	2
Scottish	20
Spanish	2
Sri Lankan	2
Thai	1
Ukrainian	1
Welsh	4715
White and Asian	3
Not Known	4211
<b>Total</b>	<b>10924</b>

Information is held on 61% of employees with the majority of employees identifying themselves as Welsh followed by British.

## Religion or Belief

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

<b>Religion</b>	<b>Total</b>
Christian	2762
Muslim	16
Hindu	7
Buddhist	14
Sikh	1
Catholic	1
Other	95
<b>% of workforce identifying with a religion</b>	<b>26.5%</b>
None	3546
Prefer not to say	426
Information not held	4056
<b>Total</b>	<b>10924</b>

Information is held on 63% of employees.

## Sexual Orientation

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

<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Total</b>
Heterosexual	4434
Gay Man	58
Gay Woman/Lesbian	49
Bisexual	45
<b>% of workforce identifying a sexual orientation</b>	<b>42.0%</b>
Prefer not to say	276
Information not held	6062
<b>Total</b>	<b>10924</b>

Information is held on 45% of employees. This is the higher than reported last year (38%). As part of the Stonewall Diversity Champion's Programme, work has and will continue to encourage more employees to complete this category on equality monitoring forms.

## Pregnancy and Maternity

As at 31 March 2022 there were 146 employees on maternity leave. During the year 2021-2022, 284 employees had been on maternity leave during this period of time.

## **Gender Reassignment**

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

## **Regulation Nine - Gender Specific Information**

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

The number of employees employed at 31 March 2022 broken down by:

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

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

The following table/s provides the specific information required:



## Breakdown of Employees by Gender and Job

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

Job Family	Female	Male	Grand Total
Administrator	951	259	1210
Ancillary	1230	476	1706
Assistant Headteacher	40	31	71
Community and Social Care	1261	243	1504
Deputy Headteacher	80	40	120
Frontline and Customer Care	450	317	767
Headteacher	98	47	145
Middle Manager	187	94	281
School Support	1649	97	1746
Skilled Manual Worker	46	112	158
Strategic Manager	35	42	77
Supervisor	121	192	313
Teacher	1344	405	1749
Technical, Specialist & Professional	563	453	1016
Unqualified Teacher	44	17	61
<b>Total</b>	<b>8099</b>	<b>2825</b>	<b>10924</b>

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

## Breakdown of Employees by Gender & Grade

The Council operated the following grading systems as at 31 March 2022.

- Chief Officers (Head of Service and above)
- National Joint Council for Local Government Services
- Soulbury (including Heads of Service)
- Teachers/Education

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

### Employees by Gender & Grade – Chief Officers

Grade	Female	Male	Total
Chief Executive	0	1	1
Deputy Chief Executive & Group Director	0	1	1
Director Level 1	1	4	5
Director Level 2	2	3	5
Service Director Level 1	1	2	3
Service Director Level 2	3	8	11
Head of Service – Soulbury	4	1	5
Head of Service Level 1	11	7	18
Head of Service Level 2	5	8	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>62</b>

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

### Employees by Gender and Grade – National Joint Council

Grade	Female	Male	Total
GR1	208	62	270
GR2	799	96	895
GR3	456	131	587
GR4	676	212	888
GR5	834	413	1247
GR6	1126	257	1383
GR7	805	289	1094
GR8	326	147	473
GR9	272	143	415
GR10	256	175	431
GR11	188	104	292
GR12	177	70	247
GR13	139	71	210
GR14	57	15	72
GR15	36	37	73
GR16	2	0	2
GR17	16	2	18
GR18	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>6373</b>	<b>2224</b>	<b>8597</b>

## Employees by Gender and Grade – Teachers/Education

Grade	Female	Male	Total
Education Psychologists and Advisers	104	34	138
Leadership Group/Headteachers	81	38	119
Deputy & Assistant Headteachers	143	82	225
Teachers	1371	412	1783
<b>Total</b>	<b>1699</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>2265</b>

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

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

## Employees by Contract Type / Working Pattern

Contract Type	Female	Male	Total
Permanent Full Time	2602	1870	4472
Permanent Full Time Term Time	146	21	167
Permanent Part Time	1364	180	1544
Permanent Part Time Term Time	2002	86	2088
Temporary Full Time	437	214	651
Temporary Full Time Term Time	12	1	13
Temporary Part Time	108	44	152
Temporary Part Time Term Time	552	52	604
Casual	876	357	1233
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>8099</b>	<b>2825</b>	<b>10924</b>

For permanent members of staff the breakdown of female/male is comparable to the overall workforce. Although 74.1% of the overall workforce is female, a much higher percentage of those females compared to males are working on part-time or term-time only basis.

## Applicants for Employment and Promotion

There were a total of 325 vacancies advertised during the year 2021-2022. The following table indicates the results of the recruitment monitoring for the same period.

## Applicants for Employment and Promotion by Protected Characteristic

	Applicants	Shortlisted	Appointed
Disabled	441	199	35
Female	3232	1971	633
LGB	491	142	48
Male	1345	909	292
Minority Ethnic	399	102	34
Non Binary	11	4	2
Transgender	11	4	0
Prefer not to say	20	8	2

## Leaving Employment

Information shows that a total of 1131 employees left the employment of the Council in 2021-2022, which included 5 employees who were made redundant. It should be noted that these employees were school based, where the decision on redundancy rests with the relevant school in accordance with School Governance Regulations. The tables below indicate the number of leavers and reasons for leaving during 2021-2022.

### Reasons for Leaving by Gender

Reason for Leaving	Female	Male	Total
Age Retirement	66	28	94
Death in Service	6	5	11
Dismissed	2	2	4
Early Retirement (Teachers)	2	0	2
End of Contract	105	49	154
Failed Probationary Period	5	2	7
Ill Health	25	3	28
Inability to Attend Work	0	1	1
Mutual Agreement	91	31	122
Redundant	5	0	5
Transfer to another Council	34	14	48
Voluntary	450	171	621
Voluntary early retirement and redundancy	21	2	23
Voluntary redundancy	8	3	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>820</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>1131</b>

## Reason for Leaving by Age

Reason for leaving	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Total
Age Retirement	0	0	0	0	36	58	94
Death in Service	0	0	3	3	3	2	11
Dismissed	1	0	0	2	1	0	4
Early retirement (Teachers)	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
End of Contract	33	50	29	21	20	1	154
Failed probationary period	4	3	0	0	0	0	7
Ill health	0	0	0	6	19	3	28
Inability to Attend Work	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Mutual agreement	1	6	8	25	59	23	122
Redundant	0	1	1	0	3	0	5
Transfer to another Council	2	23	13	10	0	0	48
Voluntary	67	189	167	122	68	8	621
VER and redundancy	0	0	0	0	18	5	23
Voluntary redundancy	1	2	2	3	2	1	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>1131</b>

## Reason for Leaving by Disability

Reason for Leaving	Total
Age Retirement	1
End of Contract	10
Failed probationary period	1
Mutual agreement	8
Voluntary	17
Voluntary early retirement + redundancy	1
Voluntary redundancy	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>

### Reason for Leaving by Ethnicity

Reason	White	Ethnic Minority	Not Known	Total
Age retirement	78	1	15	94
Death in service	10	1	0	11
Dismissed	4	0	0	4
Early retirement (Teachers)	1	0	1	2
End of contract	117	4	33	154
Failed probationary period	3	1	3	7
Ill health	24	0	4	28
Inability to Attend Work	0	0	1	1
Mutual agreement	98	0	24	122
Redundant	4	0	1	5
Transfer to another Council	34	0	14	48
Voluntary	464	10	147	621
VER with redundancy	22	0	1	23
Voluntary redundancy	8	0	3	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>1131</b>

### Reason for Leaving by Religion or Belief

Reason	Christian	Hindu	Muslim	No Religion	Other	Prefer not to say	Sikh	Not Known	Total
Age Retirement	32	0	0	10	2	2	0	48	94
Death in Service	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	9	11
Dismissed	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	4
Early retirement (teachers)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
End of contract	43	1	2	65	0	15	0	28	154
Failed probationary period	0	0	1	3	0	3	0	0	7
Ill health	7	0	0	3	3	1	0	14	28
Inability to Attend Work	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Mutual agreement	29	0	0	14	0	3	0	76	122
Redundant	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	5
Transfer to another Council	12	0	0	11	0	0	0	25	48
Voluntary	136	0	1	210	2	35	1	236	621
VER with redundancy	8	0	0	5	0	0	0	10	23
Voluntary redundancy	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	6	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>1131</b>

## Reason for Leaving by Sexual Orientation

Reason	Hetero- sexual	Gay/ Lesbian	Bi- sexual	Prefer not to say	Not Known	Total
Age retirement	37	0	0	2	55	94
Death in service	0	0	0	1	10	11
Dismissed	1	0	0	1	2	4
Early retirement (Teachers)	1	0	0	0	1	2
End of contract	74	1	5	12	62	154
Failed probationary period	4	0	0	3	0	7
Ill health	9	0	0	1	18	28
Inability to Attend Work	0	0	0	0	1	1
Mutual agreement	31	0	0	4	87	122
Redundant	2	0	0	0	3	5
Transfer to another Council	15	1	0	1	31	48
Voluntary	208	6	6	25	376	621
VER with redundancy	11	0	0	0	12	23
Voluntary redundancy	2	0	0	0	9	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>667</b>	<b>1131</b>

## Training

Equality monitoring is normally carried out in respect of attendance at internal training courses only and has been undertaken by the use of equality monitoring forms that now monitor all protected characteristics. Sexual orientation and pregnancy and maternity were added during 2014-2015.

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

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



Due to the pandemic the delivery of formal training was reviewed, unfortunately it appears that equality monitoring was not undertaken in most cases due and also due to the change of system of recording, as a consequence information is only held for 27 employees for the period 2021-2022. This will be reviewed for next year with the introduction of the equality monitoring toolkit.

### Disciplinary & Grievance

Disciplinary and Grievance cases are recorded and monitored through the Vision System. There were a total of 122 cases covering disciplinary, grievance and dignity at work and disciplinary action resulting from sickness absence in 2021-2022. The tables below provide equality monitoring information for these cases:

#### Gender

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Male	78	29	42	0	7
Female	44	20	17	0	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>

#### Age

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
16 – 24	5	4	1	0	0
25 – 34	16	12	4	0	0
35 – 44	29	13	13	0	3
45 – 54	32	8	20	0	4
55 – 64	34	8	19	0	7
65+	6	4	2	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>

#### Disability

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Disabled	8	3	3	0	2
Non Disabled	98	37	51	0	10
Information not held	16	9	5	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>

### Ethnicity

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Asian	1	1	0	0	0
Black	0	0	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0	0	0
Mixed	1	0	0	0	1
White	103	39	56	0	8
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Information not held	17	9	3	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>

### Religion or Belief

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
No Religion	43	25	17	0	1
Christian	19	5	11	0	3
Other	3	1	1	0	1
Prefer not to say	1	0	1	0	0
Information not held	56	18	29	0	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>

### Sexual Orientation

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Heterosexual	32	17	15	0	0
Gay/Lesbian	1	0	0	0	1
Bisexual	1	0	0	0	1
Prefer not to say	1	0	1	0	0
Information not held	87	32	43	0	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>

### Gender Reassignment & Pregnancy and Maternity

There was 1 employee in these categories involved in disciplinary, sickness absence or grievance cases.



## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CABINET

27<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023

#### UPDATE ON PROPOSALS TO STRENGTHEN THE CONTINUUM OF SCHOOL-BASED PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES (SEBD)

#### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND WELSH LANGUAGE

**Author:** Ceri Jones, Head of Inclusion Services (01443 744004)

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to:

- 1.1 Update Members on a two-stage pilot to allocate funding to secondary schools to establish school-based alternative curriculum Step 4 provision for learners with significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD).
- 1.2 The report will provide an overview of the impact of the provisions established to date in building the capacity of schools to meet the needs of their learners with SEBD, thus adopting an inclusive approach to strengthening the continuum of SEBD provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council in line with the underpinning ethos of recent Welsh Government Additional Learning Needs legislation and statutory guidance on developing a whole-school approach to supporting wellbeing.
- 1.3 The report also seeks approval to utilise an existing earmarked reserve to enable schools to continue to implement Step 4 provisions as part of their graduated response to meeting the needs of learners with SEBD.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the progress made to date with the Step 4 pilot (Tranche 1 and Tranche 2).

- 2.2 Approve the proposal to support secondary/all through schools to maintain their current Step 4 provision or to establish a new Step 4 provision as set out in the report.
- 2.3 Note that the £500k per year funding from September 2023 – August 2025 is already in place to support these new proposals.
- 2.4 Note that this new funding, will be in addition to the £2.645M funding already invested in Step 4 provisions since 2020.

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

- 3.1 To inform Members of the impact of the additional funding provided to a number of secondary schools to establish alternative curriculum/specialist Step 4 provision that enhances their capacity to meet the increasingly complex needs of learners with SEBD within their mainstream setting and, in turn, reduce the demand for local authority led specialist SEBD placements.
- 3.2 To ensure secondary/all through schools can continue to implement Step 4 provisions to meet the needs of learners in their catchment school in this critical post pandemic phase.

### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The model describing the local authority's approach to managing learners' behaviour is outlined in Appendix 1. Step 4 is the fourth of five steps of the Council's approach to supporting the social, emotional and behavioural needs of learners, where a learner's educational provision is provided in a local alternative provision or pupil referral unit led and managed by schools.
- 4.2 The establishment of school-based Step 4 provisions is supported by the following principles of the new statutory ALN Code (2021):
  - Early identification, intervention and prevention where needs are identified and provision put in place at the earliest opportunity and where possible interventions are put in place to prevent the development or escalation of ALN.
  - Inclusive education where the majority of children and young people with ALN are supported to participate fully in mainstream education and a whole setting approach is taken to meeting the needs of learners with ALN.
  - A bilingual system where all reasonable steps are taken to deliver Additional Learning Provision (ALP) in Welsh over time.

4.3 In March 2021, Welsh Government published its statutory guidance '*Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental health wellbeing*'. The school-based Step 4 model is supported by the overarching principles outlined in the Framework, which include:

- The responsibility for all school staff to take a whole-school approach to the promotion of good mental health and emotional well-being is universal and integral to a successful school environment.
- A whole-school approach that puts the child at the centre of decisions made about them needs partnership and involvement with families, the community, other statutory bodies and the third sector.
- A whole-school approach promotes equity for all, reducing variation and using evidence-based practices consistently and transparently, in terms of both use of data for planning and any interventions.

4.4 On 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the Cabinet Member for Education approved a delegated decision to allocate a sum of £500k per annum for two years to fund a number of mainstream secondary schools to establish their own alternative curriculum provision (Step 4 provision) or pupil referral unit for learners with significant social, emotional and behavioural needs. This proposal extended the earlier pilot (Tranche 1) where £200k per annum was allocated to secondary schools to establish Step 4 provisions for a two-year period commencing September 2019.

Further to this, in June 2020, due to the impact of COVID, Cabinet agreed to lapse a statutory consultation to create four new Learning Support Class (LSC) provisions for SEBD. A revised proposal was agreed to pool the £416k per annum originally set aside to fund the LSCs with the above £500k allocated in the delegated decision of 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020 to extend the second phase of the pilot (Tranche 2) to additional secondary schools for a two-year period commencing September 2020.

A further tranche (Tranche 3) commenced in September 2022, continuing to utilise the core funding originally earmarked to fund the LSCs (minus the funding directed to open the Welsh Medium LSC in Ysgol Garth Olwg, i.e. £300k) for a further two academic year period until July 2024.

4.5 Schools wishing to establish a Step 4 provision were required to submit a proposal setting out clear target priorities and impact measures in relation to improved outcomes for their learners with SEBD. In addition, a key element to the proposals was a clear commitment by schools to match fund any local authority contribution for the duration of the pilot and an overview of the school's long term financial planning to develop a sustainable and effective provision.

4.6 The schools that submitted successful proposals are as follows:

**Tranche 1 (September 2019 – July 2021):**

Aberdare Community School – Dare Valley Provision (off-site)

Porth Community School – Gate Provision

Rhondda Collaboration (Ferndale Community, Tonyrefail Community, Ysgol Nantgwyn, Porth)

**Tranche 2 (September 2020 – July 2022 – extended until Spring Term 2023 due to underspends as a result of the impact of Covid):**

Aberdare Community School – on-site nurture provision

Ferndale Community School

Ysgol Nantgwyn

Treorchy School

Hawthorn High School

Pontypridd High School

Bryncelynnog Comprehensive

Ysgol Garth Olwg

Ysgol Cwm Rhondda

Mountain Ash Comprehensive School

**Tranche 3 (September 2022 – July 2024)**

Ferndale Community School

Mountain Ash Comprehensive School

Ysgol Cwm Rhondda

Ysgol Nant Gwyn

Y Pant

Pontypridd High School

**5. PROGRESS UPDATE**

5.1 Despite the significant impact of the Covid-19 pandemic upon schools since March 2020, all successful schools remained committed to implementing their Step 4 provisions. However, several periods of school-closure, Covid related staff and pupil sickness absence and the need to introduce remote and blended learning approaches have inevitably impacted upon the implementation of individual school proposals over the course of the two pilots. This resulted in a number of Tranche 2 schools being delayed in setting up their provisions until much later during academic year 2020/21 than originally anticipated.

5.2 The pandemic has also posed difficulties for schools and the local authority in making direct comparisons of specific impact data relating to some of the schools' original target improvement priorities. However, all schools have been able to demonstrate the impact of their Step 4 provisions through a combination of quantitative and qualitative data and information.

5.3 **Impact upon behaviour and exclusions**

- 5.3.1 Whole school exclusion data in relation to the number of fixed term exclusions issued by the Step 4 schools highlights a mixed picture in terms of improvement, with seven out of the 12 schools demonstrating a reduction in incidents or rates per 1000 pupils of exclusion in comparison to pre-Covid pandemic data in 2018/19 and with a further school demonstrating an improvement in the rate of exclusion between 2020/21 and 2021/22.
- 5.3.2 Analysis of data for the majority of individual pupils directly accessing the Step 4 provisions indicates a clear reduction in the number of fixed term exclusions issued. For example, during academic year 2020/21, no exclusions were incurred by pupils accessing the Step 4 provision at Aberdare Community School having previously accrued a total of 32 fixed term exclusions collectively, resulting in 43 days lost to exclusion. During academic year 2021/22, only five days of exclusion were incurred to one pupil within the Step 4 cohort, in comparison to a total of 28.5 days and a permanent exclusion from another school being incurred by the same cohort of pupils prior to accessing the Step 4 provision. Ferndale Community School reported a reduction of 35% in the number of exclusion sessions incurred by its Step 4 cohort in 2021/22 and Treorchy reported no exclusions for their target cohort of 10 pupils last academic year.
- 5.3.3 In addition to exclusion data, both Tranche 1 and 2 schools report a significant positive impact that the provisions have had upon reducing the negative behaviours of Step 4 pupils and together with an increase in their positive behaviours at school. Pontypridd High School reported that pupils accessing the provision significantly reduced their negative behaviour points from an average of 102 points to 41 points. Six out of seven pupils attending the provision in Ysgol Nant Gwyn saw an average improvement of 31.7% between the start and end ratio of negative versus positive behaviour points during an academic year.
- 5.3.4 Encouragingly, several schools are reporting a revolving door approach to their provision, with a clear ambition to re-integrate learners into mainstream classes supported by access to enhanced, targeted support and intervention, as necessary.
- 5.3.5 More generally, exclusion data and reported evidence from schools highlights the considerable challenges that many schools are facing in the post pandemic phase, with increasing numbers of learners experiencing challenges in conforming to school rules and expectations, and routinely displaying defiant behaviour.

#### **5.4 Attendance/Engagement**

- 5.4.1 Despite the complexities surrounding direct data comparisons relating to attendance as a result of the pandemic and concerns regarding attendance in general, Step 4 schools have identified some improvement in attendance for pupils accessing their Step 4 provisions. For example, learners

accessing the provisions in Mountain Ash and Bryncelynnog Comprehensive Schools showed an average improvement in attendance of 54% and 22% respectively during 2020/21. Attendance of nine out of the 10 pupils accessing the provision in Mountain Ash Comprehensive in 2021/22 improved again, with five pupils gaining between 88% and 95% attendance. Ysgol Nantgwyn and Treorchy Comprehensive School have reported improved attendance in general for their Step 4 cohort.

- 5.4.2 Most notably, schools have observed an overall improvement in the quality of pupil engagement during lessons, with an increase in the number of positive behaviour points awarded to Step 4 pupils during lessons/school-based activities.
- 5.4.3 Mountain Ash Comprehensive reported an average improvement of 29% in class chart positive points gained by the target cohort, with two pupils who were new to both the school and the provision achieving 75% and 85% positive points respectively.
- 5.4.4 Ferndale Community School reported a significant increase in the number of positive behaviour points awarded to pupils, particularly within the lower year groups, thus reinforcing an underpinning objective of school-based Step 4 provision to provide access to early intervention so as to prevent the escalation of need.
- 5.4.5 In addition, many schools have reported that the Step 4 provisions have provided them with enhanced capacity to develop positive relationships with both the Step 4 learners and their parents. This was particularly effective during periods of school closure during the Covid pandemic in ensuring pupils' continued engagement in learning and in enabling schools to support any reported wellbeing concerns. For example, Porth Community School reported making over 430 wellbeing calls to the families/learners of their Step 4 provision, 'GATE', and Ysgol Cwm Rhondda reported that their Step 4 provision provided them with additional targeted capacity to make daily contact with families and learners between the extended hours of 8am – 8pm during weekdays and to provide support at the weekend during exceptionally challenging circumstances.
- 5.4.6 This enhanced contact with parents and pupils has continued effectively post-pandemic. In Mountain Ash Comprehensive, staff in the Step 4 provision make at least weekly telephone contact with parents to update them on their child's engagement and any concerns or notable positive event or incident. Parents of pupils in the Treorchy provision receive daily phone calls from Step 4 staff and are invited to termly Pastoral Support Plan review meetings. In Hawthorn High School strengthened relationships have resulted in staff, pupils and parents collaborating to develop a person-centred approach to developing a bespoke curriculum offer to the pupils in the provision. The Step 4 provision at Ferndale Community School hosts monthly learner progress meetings with pupils, parents/carers where all



stakeholders have the opportunity to voice concerns and to celebrate successes.

## **5.5 Impact on learning**

- 5.5.1 Many schools engaging in the Step 4 projects have prioritised key stage 4 learners to access their provision. The curriculum offer to these targeted learners has been bespoke to individual needs and, crucially, structured to ensure future pathways are secured for the young people.
- 5.5.2 Models have varied from school to school, but all key stage 4 offers have been designed to ensure a more vocational approach to learning, that key performance indicators are met where appropriate and that the bespoke vocational offer is provided alongside the pupils' statutory core curriculum entitlement. Wider vocational qualifications have included BTEC SWEET (linked to Health and Wellbeing, Relationships and Sexuality Education), LiFE (Lessons in Financial Education), Prince's Trust, Agored qualifications, as well as offering off site experiences such as work experience.
- 5.5.3 Staff with specific expertise have been assigned to deliver appropriate areas of the curriculum and, where needed, training has been undertaken to provide the highest quality provision to the learners.
- 5.5.4 As a consequence of these actions, together with intensive wellbeing support to improve attitudes to learning and attendance, schools have reported that the Step 4 provisions have supported them to plan clear pathways and post-16 destinations for pupils, with nearly all key stage 4 learners gaining at least level 1 in all qualifications undertaken.
- 5.5.5 In Hawthorn High, all targeted learners gained Level 1 in core and vocational qualifications, all achieving or exceeding predicted grades. In the Nurture class in Aberdare Community School, year 8 learners achieved higher standardised scores on the national adaptive reading tests than in previous years. All year 11 pupils exceeded their predicted capped nine score in Pontypridd high school by an average of 109 points in 2021. More recently the school has reported that 100% of Year 10 pupils accessing the Step 4 provision full time are on track to achieve nine qualifications including Maths, English and Science; 100% of learners will achieve vocational qualifications such as Agored, Workskills and the Prince's Trust, whilst also securing their BTEC qualification in Construction; 80% of the learners attending Step 4 are on track to achieve their target grade in English; 100% are on track to achieve their target grades in Science and Maths. In Treorchy Comprehensive, all Step 4 pupils sat GCSE Maths and English summer examinations in 2022 and completed BTEC SWEET Level 2 qualification.
- 5.5.6 In addition, the establishment of Step 4 provisions has promoted more effective partnership working with a range of external agencies to develop alternative curriculum opportunities and bespoke prevention and

intervention approaches for their pupils. Examples include collaboration with Vibe Youth, Empire Fighting Chance, Bard, The Women's Aid, Police School Liaison Officer and Eye to Eye Counselling.

5.5.7 A few schools have utilised the Gatsby+ programme alongside the academic offer. This is in line with the new 'Extended work placement' protocols for RCT schools.

5.5.8 In light of this work and the evaluations received, RCT is now offering a bespoke programme, 'Gateway to Employment' which allows learners to study for core qualifications and gain at least a Level 1 in work skills. This is delivered across many different work placements to ensure the young people can experience the varied choices of employment open to them.

## 5.6 Wellbeing approaches

5.6.1 The Welsh Government '*Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental health wellbeing*' provides a clearly defined process for schools to develop their wellbeing provision. This includes a three-stage process of scoping need and mapping strengths and weaknesses, the development of an action plan to address identified gaps and which includes how both universal and targeted provision will be delivered in collaboration with external agencies to support the wellbeing of **all** learners, and, finally, an evaluation of the effectiveness of any measures/provision put in place.

5.6.2 As expected by the new Framework schools have ensured that their Step 4 provisions are integral to their whole-school graduated response to meeting need, for the most highly complex and vulnerable learners. As such, some schools have defined entry and exit criteria to their Step 4 provisions, to ensure a robust approach to matching need to intervention, with one school operating a panel process to determine eligibility for access to the Step 4 provision, which includes scrutiny of the quality of the graduated response put in place up to that point.

5.6.3 In other schools, when targeted learners are identified, robust assessments for behaviour and wellbeing are undertaken (e.g. Boxall, PERMA, Thrive) which inform individualised action plans and interventions for learners such as ELSA, Lego therapy and mindfulness.

5.6.4 The use of PERMA, a wellbeing tool developed by Rhondda Cynon Taf Educational Psychology Service on behalf of the Central South Consortium has been an influencing factor in the planning of provision in Step 4 settings and reflects the underpinning principle that good wellbeing is a key factor in improving pupil behaviour, resilience and engagement in learning. For example, in Porth Community School, the GATE provision routinely tracks pupils' wellbeing through PERMA which enables them to tailor their wellbeing approaches to the individual. In Mountain Ash Comprehensive

School during academic year 2020/21, all learners improved their rating about school in at least one PERMA area and 54% of pupils improved their ratings about school in half or more PERMA areas. The school reported that this led to improved engagement and outcomes in learning for this cohort of learners, with all pupils making good progress against their individual targets. This increased to 73% of the target cohort during academic year 2021/22.

- 5.6.5 In Treorchy Comprehensive, other wellbeing and behaviour assessments such as Boxall, Thrive and PASS surveys indicate a significant improvement in pupils' feeling of self and wellbeing.
- 5.6.6 The use of a range of wellbeing and behaviour assessments has enabled Step 4 provisions to identify specific areas for development relating to individual pupils and develop bespoke, individualised intervention programmes. For example, many of the provisions use one page profiles/about me profiles to ensure that teaching and learning is specific to the pupils' needs and learning styles. Through diagnostic assessment, the Step 4 provision in Ferndale Community School identified that the target cohort had a clear need for tailored interventions designed specifically to build resilience. In Ysgol Nantgwyn Step 4 pupils have had access to therapeutic intervention to assist with anxiety, stress and self-harm de-escalation. The provision takes a nurture focused approach (in small group and at an individual level) to support pupils' needs with particular social, emotional and behavioural difficulties which were creating barriers to learning within a mainstream class. Most Step 4 provisions ensure pupils can access a high level of support from a trained ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant).
- 5.6.7 A key element to the success of developing and evaluating the whole-school approach to wellbeing is the importance of the 'voice' of learners and parents/carers/family. One school stated that pupils and parents of pupils accessing the alternative curriculum provision inform them that pupils are happier and more engaged in education while attending the provisions. There is frequent contact between the staff and parents/carers, and the pupils thrive from having a 'keyworker' in the school setting. They report that being a part of the provision has improved their self-confidence and wellbeing, noting that several of the pupils would have been considered for permanent exclusion or become non-attenders if they had not accessed the provisions. Learner voice is an integral part of the planning process to ensure that a person-centred approach is taken to teaching and learning. Feedback from the whole school pupil voice survey undertaken by Pontypridd High School demonstrated that 88% of pupils like attending an alternative provision at the school and nearly all (93%) pupils feel safe within the alternative provision environments.
- 5.6.8 In Treorchy Comprehensive School pupils are given ownership of their learning at the Multi-Agency Planning meeting that follows their Step 4 referral to the school's Behaviour Panel. All key stakeholders collaborate to

co-construct a Pastoral Support Plan (PSP) with clearly identified targets. When reviewing their termly PSP pupils have the opportunity to discuss how they feel through sharing their strengths and areas for development.

5.6.9 Direct feedback from learners regarding their Step 4 provision includes the following comments:

**Pupil A**

*“They give me options and listen to me more. Things don’t feel so rushed.”*

*“When I need to talk to someone, they always listen to me.”*

*“I don’t really enjoy coming to school, but I feel better in nurture.”*

**Pupil B**

*“I feel a bit more comfortable here than in mainstream lessons.”*

*“It makes me less worried about coming to school.”*

**Pupil C**

*“I feel safer coming to school knowing I can go to the nurture room.”*

*“I feel like I understand things more and get more done.”*

5.6.10 Schools have identified specific case studies to demonstrate the positive impact of their Step 4 provisions on the behaviour, attendance/engagement and educational outcomes of individual learners. Examples have been provided in Appendix 2.

## 5.7 Whole-school impact and sustainability

5.7.1 Schools have reported clear evidence of the wider positive impact that their Step 4 provisions have had upon a range of whole-school areas for improvement. These include whole-school behaviour management, curriculum development, the roll-out of newly adopted wellbeing approaches to wider cohorts of pupils and the development of effective partnership working with a broad range of partner agencies.

5.7.2 Porth Community School, a Tranche 1 pilot school, initially introduced a range of vocational qualifications for their Step 4 learners which have now been rolled out to the wider school cohort. The use of PERMA was instrumental in developing strategies to support improved wellbeing within the Step 4 provision, and, as a consequence, the school has rolled out the use of PERMA to track the wellbeing needs of the wider school cohort of learners and to identify appropriate interventions where necessary.

5.7.3 Ysgol Cwm Rhondda has reported on how targeted wellbeing strategies used in their Step 4 provision have informed whole-school development of the new Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning Experience (AOLE) under the New Curriculum for Wales framework as part of an early intervention and preventative approach to meeting needs.

- 5.7.4 Bryncelynnog Comprehensive noted a significant reduction in the number of daily behaviour incidents that needed to be addressed by the school's Senior Management Team, thus providing additional capacity to senior staff, and also how improved behaviour across the wider school environment had had a positive impact upon individual staff members. Similar feedback was provided by Hawthorn High School.
- 5.7.5 Following an Estyn inspection in 2018 Aberdare Community School was placed in an Estyn statutory category of Significant Improvement with a recommendation to improve attendance and behaviour. As part of the Tranche 1 pilot, an off-site Step 4 provision was set up at the Dare Valley Wellbeing Centre to deliver a bespoke curriculum and wellbeing support to a small number of key stage 4 pupils requiring the most intensive support.
- 5.7.6 The Estyn monitoring report dated November 2021, cites the above provision as one of the school-based approaches that  
*'have led to improved engagement, attendance and positive behaviour for learners at risk of disaffection' (Estyn Monitoring Report, 2021).*
- 5.7.7 Crucially, the Step 4 provision has been a core element within the school's overarching approach to behaviour management. It has been a significant contributing factor in the notable improvement in whole-school exclusions over the past four academic years (see Tables 1 and 2 below), resulting in an 81% reduction in the number of incidents of exclusion and a 75% reduction in the number of days lost to exclusions over this period of time.

**Table 1:**

<b>Aberdare Community School</b>	
<b>Number of Incidents which led to a Fixed Term Exclusion</b>	
Year	Number of Incidents (Sept to Whitsun half term)
2018/19	269
2019/20	41
2020/21	20
2021/22	51

**Table 2:**

<b>Aberdare Community School</b>	
<b>Number of Days Lost to Fixed Term Exclusion</b>	
Year	Number of Days Lost (Sept to Whitsun half term)
2018/19	447.5
2019/20	103.5
2020/21	37.5
2021/22	112.5

Aberdare Community School is no longer in a statutory Estyn category for improvement and was reported by Estyn as having made 'notable

improvements' against **Recommendation 1: Improve attendance and Behaviour.**

5.7.8 Due to the success of the secondary phase Step 4 provision (called 'GATE') in Porth Community School, a decision was made to establish and fund a similar provision called 'NEST' to support pupils in the primary phase of the school in September 2021. This ensures a consistent approach to supporting behaviour and wellbeing across both phases of the school and ensures a more targeted approach to early intervention within the school – both key factors of the whole-school approach outlined in the national Wellbeing Framework. Similarly, the POD Step 4 model for Key Stage 4 has been replicated for Key Stage 3 pupils with significant SEBD at Treorchy Comprehensive from school's resources.

5.7.9 As part of the monitoring and governance arrangements established by the Education Directorate, all schools are required to provide information to the local authority Step 4 Monitoring and Governance Group on a termly and annual basis on how identified improvement priorities relating to their Step 4 provision feed into their School Improvement Plan. This also includes a requirement for schools to report on their planning for sustainability. In view of the increasing financial pressures facing councils and schools, there are significant concerns expressed by school leaders that existing provisions may no longer be affordable in the long term. It is hoped that by creating a further funding stream via Tranche 4, it will be possible to provide greater resilience in the system at a time of significant financial pressures and increasing concern about learner wellbeing, behaviour and engagement.

## 5.8 Reduction in PRU placements

5.8.1 Trend data for the last four years demonstrates a reduction in the number of pupils requiring a placement at Ty Gwyn Education Centre, the local authority's secondary phase pupil referral unit (PRU).

**Table 3:**

<b>Number of pupils accessing Ty Gwyn PRU</b>			
Sept 18	59	April 19	55
Sept 19	43	April 20	47
Sept 20	38	April 21	36
Sept 21	19	April 22	23
Sept 22	39		

5.8.2 Prior to the establishment of Step 4 provisions, Ty Gwyn was set up to cater for a maximum capacity of 88 learners, and it was not unusual to see pupil numbers rise significantly in-year during each academic year. This inevitably impacted upon the quality of provision available to learners accessing PRU provision.

- 5.8.3 Since September 2019, approximately 200 pupils have accessed school-based Step 4 provisions and it is anticipated that this will increase further during the Tranche 3 phase. The availability of flexible, local-based SEBD provision, that can be accessed swiftly without the need for referral on to the local authority, has undoubtedly contributed to the reduction in local authority PRU placements required over the past two academic years.
- 5.8.4 The reduction in the number of pupils accessing Ty Gwyn is enabling the PRU to develop as a more specialist provision that provides bespoke learning and therapeutic provision to meet the needs of learners with the most significant and complex social, emotional and behavioural needs within the local authority, thus reducing the demand for costly out of county placements and supporting efficiency saving targets.
- 5.8.5 Following an inspection in October 2019, Estyn determined that special measures were required in relation to Ty Gwyn PRU. Pleasingly, following a period of rapid improvement, Estyn removed Ty Gwyn from requiring special measures in November 2021. Within their monitoring report, Estyn acknowledged the contribution that the development of the continuum of SEBD provision, which includes Step 4 provisions, has made to the ability of the PRU to improve:

*‘A positive professional working relationship with the local authority is also supporting improvements across the PRU. This collaborative working relationship continues to develop as the local authority establishes the PRU’s role as part of the wider behaviour provision across the authority’*

*Monitoring Report, Ty Gwyn, Estyn. November 2021*

## **5.9 Governance Arrangements**

- 5.9.1 Robust monitoring and governance arrangements have been established to support schools to develop their Step 4 provisions. This includes a strategic Monitoring and Governance Group consisting of senior officers within the Education Directorate and Finance Department of the local authority, Principal Improvement Partners from the Central South Consortium and Head Teacher representatives. The group is supported by the Step 4 Operational Group. Both groups meet on a termly basis.
- 5.9.2 Schools are required to submit a termly progress/impact report, together with an annual impact report to the local authority.
- 5.9.3 A key function of the monitoring groups is to co-ordinate support for those Step 4 provisions where there is an identified need for improvement which includes promoting the sharing of effective practice through school-to-school support. Examples of support provided to schools include advice regarding the use of specific assessments for behaviour, the effective use

of the PERMA wellbeing tool and the implementation of evidence-based wellbeing interventions.

## **6. PROPOSAL**

- 6.1 In light of the positive impact of the Step 4 pilot, and the commitment of schools to continue to develop their own school-based Step 4 provisions, it is proposed to invest an additional £500k per annum over a 2 year period to support pupils with an ALN, including those with social, emotional, behavioural and wellbeing needs, to enable more secondary/all through schools to establish/maintain Step 4 provisions, thus building on the effective and inclusive practice developed during the pilot. This funding is already earmarked and set aside.
- 6.2 It is proposed that all secondary schools will be invited to submit a detailed proposal for consideration by the local authority during Summer Term 2023 in order to establish or maintain their Step 4 provision from September 2023. Selection will be based on an evaluation of the current level of need in the school; the existing stepped approach to managing behaviour; commitment to match funding; development of a high quality and sustainable provision that will deliver improved outcomes for learners in their local communities and that supports the implementation of both the new Welsh Government legislation in relation to learners with ALN and the national *'Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental health wellbeing'*.
- 6.3 Providing schools with additional resources to establish alternative curriculum provision or specialist provision tailored to accommodate the needs of learners with SEBD in their local community will ensure that the Council is taking an inclusive and flexible approach to developing its continuum of SEBD provision within the county borough. This reflects the emphasis within the national Framework upon the value of high-quality inclusion that provides equity of opportunity to all learners within a whole school setting and the recognition that each school needs to take an individual approach to meeting the needs of its learners based on their local context *'so there is no one-size-fits-all approach'* (Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental health wellbeing, Welsh Government 2021).
- 6.4 Schools will continue to be expected to provide termly and annual progress/impact reports alongside their financial claims. Robust monitoring arrangements as outlined in paragraph 5.9 will continue to ensure that schools are provided with all possible support and guidance to achieve improved outcomes for learners accessing Step 4 provisions.
- 6.5 A progress report will be presented to Cabinet of the impact of the Step 4 provisions. This will allow the Council to keep its specialist SEBD provision under review and, if necessary, consider whether the approach outlined



above continues to make effective use of Council funding in improving outcomes for this particularly vulnerable group of learners.

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

- 7.1 Welsh Language, Equality, and Community Impact Assessments are not required for the purpose of this report.

## **8. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 In line with the requirements of Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act (ALNET) 2018, which stipulates that all local authorities must provide bilingual ALN provision, and the Council's vision to increase the number of Welsh medium learners, the proposal will provide an equitable process for Welsh medium schools, alongside English medium schools, to submit a bid to the local authority to access funding to establish a school-based Step 4 provision. This would enable pupils to access Welsh medium specialist provision/alternative curriculum opportunities in their catchment school and local community, in line with the underpinning principles relating to inclusion reflected in new ALN legislation and to develop a whole school approach to supporting the wellbeing needs of learners as outlined in the Welsh Government statutory guidance '*Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental health wellbeing.*' The proposal extends the current Step 4 pilot where two Welsh medium schools have successfully gained Step 4 funding.

## **9. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT**

- 9.1 There are no consultation implications arising from the content of the report.

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

- 10.1 It is recommended that £500k per year is invested to further support the continuation of Step 4 provisions over a 2 year period (from September 2023 to August 2025). This funding is in addition to the £2.645M already invested into Step 4 provisions (Tranches 1-3) since 2020.
- 10.2 Schools wishing to establish a Step 4 provision will be required to submit a detailed funding bid and make a clear commitment to match funding with the aim of developing a sustainable and effective provision.
- 10.3 With this additional investment, it is anticipated that the demand for secondary specialist SEBD placements will continue to diminish. The reduction in the number of specialist placements allocated to learners in the secondary PRU has enabled the local authority to redistribute an element of the PRU funding to support the existing Step 4 pilot. It is anticipated that continued investment in supporting secondary schools to establish school-based Step 4 provisions will enable the local authority to maintain the

reduction in the capacity of Ty Gwyn in the long term, thus ensuring that the PRU can meet the needs of its most highly complex learners with social, emotional, behavioural and wellbeing needs within the county borough without the need to seek very costly out of county placements.

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

- 11.1 Section 316A of the Education Act 1996 specifies that children with SEN should normally be educated in mainstream schools so long as this is compatible with them receiving the special educational provision that their learning difficulty calls for; the efficient education of other children, and the efficient use of resources.
- 11.2 Section 315 of the Education Act 1996 also requires the local authority to ensure that SEN provision is kept under review. Sections 1:20 and 1:21 of the SEN Code of Practice for Wales (2002) also requires LAs to evaluate the effectiveness of school funding arrangements in supporting and raising the achievement of children with SEN.
- 11.3 The statutory ALN Code (Wales) 2021, places a statutory duty upon the local authority to keep under review the additional learning provision available in its area and its supporting arrangements to ensure provision is sufficient to meet the overall needs of its population of learners with additional learning needs.
- 11.4 The Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 provides a legal framework to deliver a transformational curriculum, Curriculum for Wales 2022, that focuses upon developing strong and inclusive schools for all pupils.
- 11.5 The local authority must have regard to the Welsh Government statutory guidance '*Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental health wellbeing*' when carrying out their duties in promoting the welfare of learners, including meeting their mental and emotional wellbeing needs.

## **12. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT**

- 12.1 There are links to RCTCBC's Education and Inclusion Services Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2025 and its mission: '*To deliver equity and excellence in education and enhanced well-being for all*', most notably:
  - Strategic Priority 2: Supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum, high quality teaching and learning and improved outcomes for all.
  - Strategic Priority 3: Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families.

- 12.2 The implementation of the new Welsh Government ALN legislation and the processes and systems developed at a local council level will ensure that some of RCTCBC's most vulnerable learners will have the best chance of achieving positive outcomes.
- 12.3 The information in the report contributes to the priorities within RCTCBC's Corporate Plan, 'Making a Difference'.
- 12.4 Organising services so that they are focussed on early intervention and prevention is a key statutory requirement of the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act 2015 and a key element of RCTCBC's Corporate Plan.

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

- 13.1 Given the requirement of the new ALNET Act (2018) and the ALN Code (2021) to provide high quality inclusive provision for pupils with a range of ALN within mainstream settings, including those with SEBD and the requirement for the local authority and schools to have regard for the statutory Welsh Government '*Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental health wellbeing*' the above proposal to secure additional resources will ensure that the Council successfully delivers on its statutory obligations, and as such is a strategic proposal relevant to all wards.

### **14. CONCLUSION**

- 14.1 In summary, there is clear evidence that Step 4 provisions are providing an effective, inclusive model for addressing the social, emotional, behavioural and wellbeing needs of their most challenging learners. This has resulted not only in improved outcomes in terms of wellbeing, behaviour and academic attainment for learners directly accessing the provisions, but also in whole-school improvements, such as whole-school behaviour management, the development of whole-school wellbeing approaches and curriculum development, that have benefited the wider school population.
- 14.2 The development of Step 4 provisions has built the capacity of schools to improve the robustness and quality of their graduated response to supporting the social, emotional, behavioural and wellbeing needs of learners, through the implementation of a broader range of bespoke interventions and alternative curriculum offer. This, in turn, has seen the demand for more costly specialist PRU placements in Ty Gwyn reduce over the duration of the Step 4 pilot.
- 14.3 Adopting an inclusive approach to meeting the needs of learners with significant social, emotional, behavioural and wellbeing needs ensures that Rhondda Cynon Taf embraces one of the underpinning principles of the new Additional Learning Needs legislation whereby most learners with

additional learning needs should have their needs met in their local mainstream setting within a whole-setting approach to meeting needs.

- 14.4 This approach also clearly reflects the ethos of the Welsh Government *'Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental health wellbeing'* that values inclusion, effective collaboration for the collective good and the creation of a *'supporting environment where young people are encouraged to fulfil their personal and academic potential, where they thrive, learn and emotionally develop'* together with its core values of 'belonging, efficacy and having your voice heard'.
- 14.5 In light of the above, the Education Directorate recommends that Cabinet approves the proposal to use available resources to enhance provision for pupils with ALN within the county borough by enabling more secondary schools to establish or maintain school-based Step 4 provisions. The Access and Inclusion Service will continue to monitor the effectiveness of Step 4 provisions as part of the local authority's continuum of additional learning provision for learners with complex social, emotional, behavioural and wellbeing needs under its statutory duties as set out in new ALN legislation.

**Other Information:-**

***Relevant Scrutiny Committee***

Education and Inclusion Scrutiny

***Contact Officer***

Ceri Jones, Head of Inclusion Services

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

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

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**27<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2023**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE**

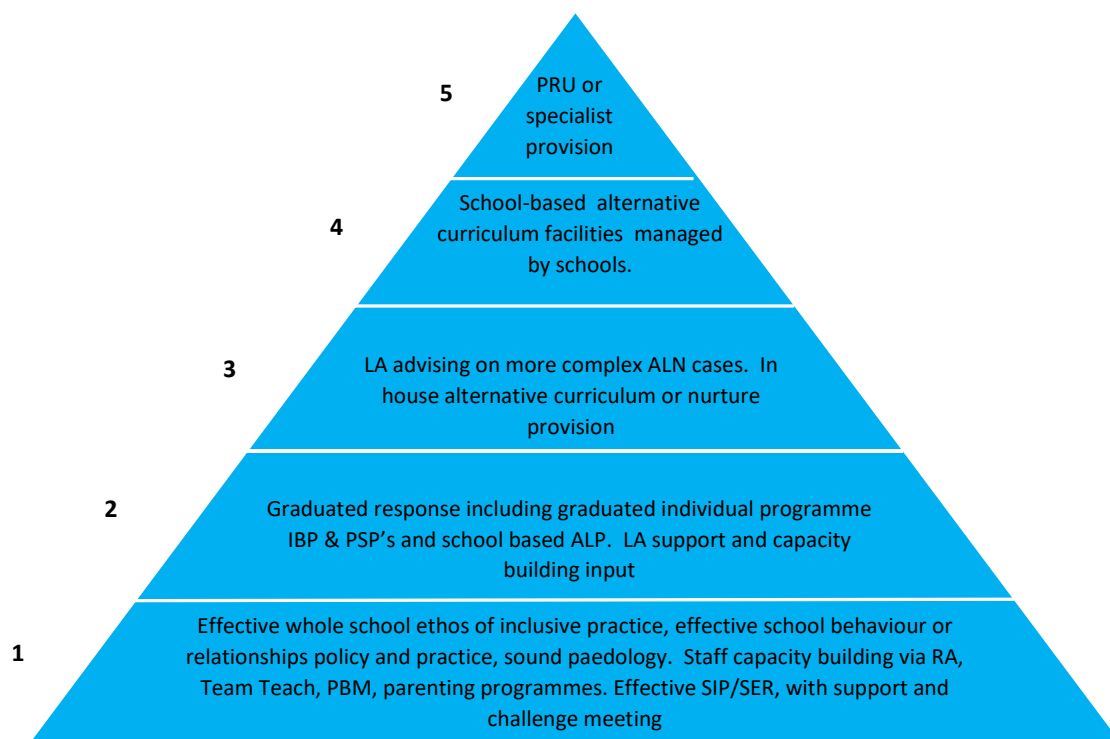
**Item: UPDATE ON PROPOSALS TO STRENGTHEN THE CONTINUUM OF SCHOOL-BASED PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES (SEBD)**

**Background Papers**

[Cabinet Report March 2020: Proposals to Strengthen the Continuum of Provision for Pupils with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties and Significant Additional Learning Needs](#)

**Officer to contact:** Ceri Jones, Head of Inclusion Services

## Appendix 1



**Step 1** is characterised by robust whole school approaches to positive behaviour management and the consistent implementation of the school behaviour/relationships policy due to robust whole school training and effective leadership. Good classroom practice will be in place and clear, consistently applied behaviour management routines and good teaching and learning will be evident in classrooms. To support this, schools will be challenged and supported (as they will be throughout the stages) through self-evaluation and school improvement planning processes. In some cases, where there is cause for concern due to high exclusion rates, additional support and challenge meetings will be provided. External support for the school, pupil and family will be essential at higher levels but should not be overlooked at this step.

**Step 2** links most closely to what should be provided at School Action and School Action Plus of the SEN Code of Practice and for pupils requiring Additional Learning Provision (ALP) as outlined in their school-based Individual Development

Plan (IDP). The main characteristics of this stage will be support for capacity building so that schools can offer a personalised graduated response to individual pupils. This may take many forms for learners who should continue to access mainstream education and the provision of individual or small group interventions aimed at further improving social, emotional and behavioural skills. This could include ELSA, Thrive, and restorative or learning coach interventions to target the development of identified social, emotional and behavioural skills. Interventions at this stage could also include access to an in-house inclusion provision aimed at managing significant behavioural incidents in school and avoiding fixed term exclusions, with a focus placed on reflection and repairing harmed relationships.

**Step 3** is characterised by in-house alternative curriculum support and/or 'revolving door' provision for pupils. At KS3 the aim should be that targeted pupils eventually return to mainstream provision but access short-term but intensive support, which could include nurture provision. At KS4 the in-house alternative curriculum arrangements may be exclusive to a particular group of dis-engaged pupils.

**Step 4** is where the most significant change in provision is envisioned with strategically situated Key Stage 4 Alternative Curriculum Centres managed by school staff and potentially delivered in partnership with other providers. This provision should have a significant impact on school attendance and exclusions and reduce the demand for step 5 provisions.

Focus could be placed on providing learners with a bespoke core curriculum offer delivered by subject specialists and access to more vocational training opportunities with external providers if appropriate. Any externally commissioned provider should have their registration status checks and all placements risk assessed. Good quality information about pupils' learning and behavioural needs should be provided and measures taken to ensure curriculum continuity and progression, robust attendance recording and engagement.

**Step 5** is the intensive specialist end of the spectrum, where pupils who cannot manage a mainstream school curriculum or the Key Stage 4 alternative curriculum arrangements are placed. These pupils will be attending a learning support class provision for young people with significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties or the LA PRU.

A significant proportion of these pupils will have a statement of SEN under the outgoing SEN Code of Practice or will have a Local Authority maintained IDP due to their complex ALN that requires ALP that cannot reasonably be provided by a mainstream setting. Some pupils will have been permanently excluded. Some pupils will move into this category of provision early in their school lives. In exceptional circumstances some learners will have escalated through the stages and others may move up or down the steps depending on their presenting needs.

## Appendix 2

### Case Studies

#### **Pupil A**

Pupil A was referred to Step 4 provision due to having high behaviour points and exclusions rising. The pupil had previously attended the Tai Centre Primary Pupil Referral Unit but transitioned to mainstream secondary school. Before accessing the Step 4 provision the pupil had:

- 125 Negative behaviour points
- 2 exclusions
- Attendance 83%
- Underachieved in all subject areas

Following access to the provision until the pupil left school two years later, the pupil had:

- 0 Negative behaviour points
- 0 exclusions
- Attendance 87%
- Secured 9 GCSE qualifications at A\*-G

#### **Pupil B**

Pupil B accessed the provision as a year 8 pupil who had struggled with transition to secondary education in Year 7. Access to existing school-based interventions and involvement from the Educational Psychology Service had had no discernible impact upon pupil B.

Since accessing the Step 4 nurture provision Pupil B's attendance has improved from 66% to 77%, with no exclusions and he has made accelerated academic progress (e.g. two sub-levels of progress in Science). His PERMA rating for Wellbeing has improved in four out of the six areas, with notable improvement in his rating for engagement increasing from 6/10 to 9/10.

<b>Pupil B</b>	<b>April 2021</b>	<b>July 2021</b>
Positive Emotions	8/10	9/10
Engagement	6/10	9/10



Relationships	7/10	6/10
Meaning	5/10	8/10
Accomplishment	3/10	6/10
Negative Emotions	5/10	6/10

Nurture provision staff have noted:

*'When Pupil B first started accessing the Nurture Class, he was quite disruptive, loud in class, he would laugh when spoken to about his behaviour, he was easily distracted and he would often deny doing things, after staff had witnessed it.*

*Over the past few months, we have seen many changes in Pupil B's attitude and behaviour. He is enthusiastic to learn, he shows good manners, kindness and will often offer to help staff. He has also made close friendships in the Nurture Class. Pupil B has made excellent progress on his targets, and now meets them almost every lesson. Pupil B is very motivated by the rewards system.*

*Pupil B has completed work to help anxiety, communication skills, to help form friendships, behaviour, mindfulness and he really enjoys ELSA and Lego Therapy activities.'*

Pupil B has reported:

*'I like coming to Nurture because I like having hot chocolate and toast in the morning and talking to the staff. I likes having a card to show teachers when I am stressed. I think my behaviour has changed and I have enjoyed learning about respect and how to work together with others.'*

Parent of Pupil B has reported:

*'The nurture group has been fabulous for Pupil B. He is a like a different boy – calmer in the house, will sit and talk to us. He is eager to come to school and is much more interested in learning.'*

## **Pupil C**

Pupil C had a record of very challenging behaviour. Pupil C had experienced trauma and a number of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES). Pupil C had reached the maximum support on the graduated response package that the school could offer with no impact, including being placed in a Nurture provision. Pupil C displayed challenging and risk taking behaviour that would lead to Pupil C needing

to access Internal Exclusion provision on a daily basis, or a formal exclusion from school.

Since accessing the safe and consistent approach adopted by the Step 4 provision, Pupil C has made significant improvements in terms of both their engagement with learning and behaviour, demonstrating an ability to regulate their emotions and developing coping strategies with the support of Step 4 staff.

Pupil C has only received one full day exclusion since accessing the Step 4 provision, their attendance has improved together with what is described by school as an 'incredible improvement' in the number of positive reward points achieved on Class Charts.

Pupil C has had access to a broad curriculum including Maths, English, Equality and Diversity, BTEC ART, Duke of Edinburgh Award, BTEC Sweet, Lego Therapy and support from the YEPS team. This bespoke and differentiated learning programme has been both challenging and rewarding for Pupil C. In September, Pupil C will also receive Thrive and ELSA interventions tailored to their individual needs and will be supported with GCSE options within the Step 4 provision, with an ambition for them to access some mainstream lessons with support from Step 4 staff.

Pupil C's parents have reported to school that they are 'thrilled' with their child's progress and are very supportive of the provision.



## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CABINET

27<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023

### EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES PLANNED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24

#### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS 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, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Transformation

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to:

- 1.1 Provide Members with details of the capital works for approval for 2023/24 as part of the Council's three-year Capital Programme, as well as provide further information relating to an additional Capital Funding Grant awarded by Welsh Government for 2022/23.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approve the Education Capital Programme priority schemes for 2023/24 as outlined in Appendices 1-11 and approve scheme commencement.
- 2.2 Note the receipt of an additional £4.052 million of capital funding from Welsh Government via the Capital Funding Grant.
- 2.3 Approve the projects outlined in the report as priority for delivery in 2023/24 as outlined in Appendix 12 and approve scheme commencement.

#### 3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 An ongoing programme of work is required in school premises to deal with essential condition and health and safety issues across the school estate, to ensure school buildings are 'safe, watertight and warm'.

- 3.2 These works will support schools with effective maintenance that will continue to reduce the risks associated with buildings and building services and help to prevent the need for significant capital expenditure and disruption to children's education which can follow with building failure.
- 3.3 To continue to deliver the Council's long term school modernisation improvement programme supporting one of the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities: 'Prosperity – Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper'.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Members will be aware that an amount of £5.808M has been allocated to the planned capital programme (minor works) for 2023/24, as agreed by Council on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023.
- 4.2 In addition to the planned capital programme allocation, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2023 the Council received notification from Welsh Government that it is providing £50 million to support local authorities across Wales to address capital maintenance pressures and support energy efficiency works via the Capital Funding Grant. The funding has been awarded to alleviate financial pressure on local authorities and supports Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, as one of its key priorities in addressing poor condition schools.
- 4.3 The funding will be provided through capital rather than revenue funding, with local authorities able to determine their priorities of spend. The Council's funding allocation is £4.052M.
- 4.4 The continuation of the three-year rolling Capital Programme, plus the additional Capital Funding Grant allocation, will continue to make significant enhancements to the quality of our school premises. The education capital programme continues to be a vital part of the Council's School Modernisation Programme in order to prepare schools for the new Curriculum for Wales
- 4.5 Fit for purpose school buildings are important in ensuring that the Council can focus on improving educational outcomes and achieving our mission of achieving Equity and Excellence in Education and Enhanced Wellbeing for All. Our commitment to improving our school buildings and creating 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning spaces will be achieved by delivering modern school facilities, rich with ICT and improved energy efficiency which drives down our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions contributing to the Council's 2030 net zero carbon target.
- 4.6 Improving our school estate also supports schools, and the Council, with delivering the Welsh Government's Community Schools initiative, embedding schools at the heart of society, ensuring that our schools are used for the wider benefit of the communities directly served by their schools. This will allow increased access to good quality facilities and engagement in extra-curricular activities. For example, access to school halls for music, drama and play opportunities; classrooms for learning activities; spaces for meetings; and recreational facilities for sport. These opportunities will support active participation and engagement in community activities in safe and accessible environments.

4.7 This funding will also ensure that the Council supports local supply chains, the local construction industry and small businesses at the heart of our communities and will provide much needed local employment.

4.8 In framing options relating to programme of works, the following factors have been taken into account:

- results of the Property Condition Surveys and further investigation works undertaken by Council surveyors and engineers;
- priorities set out in the Service Asset Management Plan in line with the Corporate Asset Management Plan;
- ESTYN Inspection Reports;
- health and safety considerations;
- energy and carbon reduction strategies;
- classroom refurbishments and the development of flexible and creative teaching spaces to meet the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales; and
- investment in adaptations to schools to assist pupils with mobility and other accessibility needs.

4.9 The planned capital programme has been divided into categories identifying the nature of the works considered to be a priority.

## **5. CATEGORIES WITHIN THE PROGRAMME**

5.1 The table below sets out the proposed allocation of the planned capital programme funds now available to spend in 2023/24.

<b>SPEND CATEGORY</b>	<b>£M</b>
Kitchen Refurbishments/Remodelling	0.280
Window and Door Replacements	0.110
Essential Works	0.420
Electrical Rewiring	0.140
Fire Alarm Upgrades	0.115
Toilet Refurbishments	0.250
Equalities Act/Compliance Works	0.357
Education and Inclusion Access Condition Surveys	0.040
Boiler Replacement	0.412
Roof Renewal	0.844
Asbestos Remediation Works	0.640
21 <sup>st</sup> Century Classroom Upgrade	0.071
Improvements to Schools	0.070
Capitalisation of IT Hardware/Software and Licences	0.235
Universal Free School Meals	1.824
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.808</b>

5.2 Appendices 1–11 set out programmes of work for each category included above, with the exception of Education and Inclusion Access Condition Surveys, Asbestos Remediation Works, Improvements to Schools, and Capitalisation of IT Hardware/Software and Licences.

5.3 The following narrative summarises the required investment and intended outcome of each spend category:

- **Kitchen Refurbishments/Remodelling**  
A rolling programme of replacement kitchens is required to maintain the current capital asset of school buildings and assist with much needed improvements, contributing towards the implementation of the Welsh Government 'Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Wales) 2013'. Appendix 1 provides Members with a list of identified schemes.
- **Window and Door Replacements**  
A rolling programme of replacement windows and doors is required to improve the energy efficiency, reduce energy costs and maintain the current capital asset of school buildings. Appendix 2 provides Members with a list of identified schemes.
- **Essential Works**  
Members will be aware of the amount and value of outstanding historical maintenance works required to the buildings in the Education and Inclusion Services portfolio. Appendix 3 provides Members with a list of priority works, considered essential to maintain a 'safe, watertight and warm' environment for all users.
- **Electrical Rewiring**  
Appendix 4 provides Members with details of Education establishments that require electrical rewiring.
- **Fire Alarm Upgrades**  
Appendix 5 provides Members with details of schools that require fire alarm upgrades from manual to automatic detection systems in order to comply with current legislation.
- **Toilet Refurbishments**  
Appendix 6 provides Members with details of schools that require refurbishment to comply with The Education (School) Premises Regulations 1999, the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and to support the recommendations in the report 'Lifting the Lid on the Nation's School Toilets' produced by the Children's Commissioner for Wales.
- **Equalities Act/Compliance Works**  
An allocation of funding has been set aside to continue with works as and when deemed necessary to comply with the Equality Act 2010. Appendix 7 provides Members with a list of identified schemes.
- **Education and Inclusion Access Condition Surveys**  
Continuation of Phase 2 access condition surveys to all primary schools to improve accessibility throughout the Education estate in order to comply with the Equality Act 2010.

- **Boiler Replacement**  
A significant number of systems are reaching the end of their useful life; therefore, it is considered prudent to fund a rolling programme of replacement to assist with the reduction in energy and carbon emissions. Appendix 8 provides Members with a list of identified schemes.
- **Roof Renewal**  
Again it is considered prudent to allocate funding to ensure a rolling programme is maintained. Appendix 9 provides Members with a list of identified schemes.
- **Asbestos Remediation Works**  
An allocation of funding has been earmarked to continue essential asbestos remediation works, following the results of recent asbestos surveys commissioned by the Council, and to progress a programme of replacement CLASP buildings affected by asbestos.
- **21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Classroom Upgrades**  
Upgrading existing classrooms to create 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning spaces that will assist schools in delivering the new curriculum providing vibrant modern, water tight and warm classrooms, with additional ICT infrastructure. Appendix 10 provides Members with a list of identified schemes.
- **Improvements to Schools**  
Under accounting regulations, certain expenditure that was previously charged directly to the revenue budget is now shown in the Capital Programme.
- **Capitalisation of IT Hardware/Software and Licences**  
An allocation of funding has been committed for on-going hardware, software and licences to support essential data systems such as SIMS (Schools Information Management System).
- **Universal Free School Meals**  
Capital funding received from the Welsh Government will assist in the roll out of this new initiative. This funding will be utilised to upgrade and extend existing kitchens and serveries within our schools to facilitate the increased uptake in this service. Appendix 11 provides Members with a list of identified schemes.

5.4 Appendix 12 provides members with the proposed projects to be funded by the additional Capital Funding Grant in 2023/24.

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

6.1 The proposed schemes have given due consideration to equality issues, particularly in relation to access to our school premises. Schools are a key part of our communities and as such it is important that they are well maintained, accessible and 'fit for purpose.'

6.2 As this report is not seeking permission to implement a proposal in respect of a

change of function, service, strategy or policy, it is deemed that an EqlA is not required in this instance.

## **7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 As this report is not seeking permission to implement a proposal in respect of a change of function, service, strategy or policy, it is deemed that a Welsh Language Impact Assessment is not required in this instance.

## **8. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT**

- 8.1 There are no consultation requirements arising from this report. However, subject to the decision of Cabinet, further collaboration will be undertaken with each school setting to deliver the agreed programme of works in a suitable and mutually agreed time period.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The funding allocation to support spend categories contained within this report was agreed by Council on 8th March 2023 as part of the three-year Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2025/26. This report does not commit any additional spend over and above this agreed allocation.

- 9.2 The additional funding allocation of £4.052M is 100% grant funded and there is no requirement for any match funding or financial contribution from the Council. The grant funding has been awarded for 2022/23 retrospectively, however the building works can be delivered by the end of March 2024.

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

- 10.1 The legislation considered in compiling this report is the 'Keeping Learners Safe' - the role of local authorities, governing bodies and proprietors of independent schools under the Education Act 2002.

## **11. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT**

- 11.1 There are links to RCTCBC's Corporate Plan for the period between 2020 to 2024, specifically the priority:

- Prosperity – Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper
  - ensuring we have good schools, so all children have access to a great education.

- 11.2 Due regard has been made to all seven wellbeing goals and the Five Ways of Working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which requires the Council to think about the long-term impact of decisions, on communities to prevent consistent issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

This proposal would contribute to achieving the wellbeing goals by:



- Planning for the ‘long term,’ helping to ‘prevent’ problems occurring or getting worse in the future and delivering services in ‘collaboration’ with others.

This proposal would achieve the five ways of working by:

- Improving school environments that can deliver the new Curriculum for Wales.
- Improving sustainability of school buildings in the Council portfolio through a commitment to reducing our carbon emissions.
- Provide first class learning facilities for pupils and the wider community and contribute towards a healthier Wales by providing additional facilities for pupils.
- Contributing towards a prosperous Wales by committing to opportunities for local tradespeople and to use local resources, wherever possible to undertake the works to schools.

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

- 12.1 The Education and Inclusion Service Planned Capital Programme provides investment in schools throughout the County Borough, as such this report is not focussed on focussed on electoral wards but delivers investment on a strategic level.

## **13. CONCLUSION**

- 13.1 The projects identified in both the planned capital programme and the additional capital maintenance grant can be committed and delivered within the financial year and will have an immediate impact on improving the fabric of schools, enhancing the learning environments both internally and externally, providing improved facilities for the schools’ and communities that they serve. A coherent plan of expenditure will contribute to improvements in a wide range of physical environments benefiting pupils, staff, young people and members of the public.

### **Other Information:-**

#### ***Relevant Scrutiny Committee***

Education and Inclusion Services Scrutiny

#### ***Contact Officer***

Andrea Richards, Service Director, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Transformation

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

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

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**27<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023**

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

**Item: EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES PLANNED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24**

**Background Papers:**

Council March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023: The Council's Three Year Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2025/26

**Officer to contact:** Andrea Richards, Service Director, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Transformation

### **APPENDIX 1: Kitchen Refurbishments/Remodelling**

<b>Property/School</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Estimated Cost (£)</b>
Ysgol Ty Coch (Buarth Y Capel site)	Kitchen refurbishment	80,000
Maesgwyn Special School	New servery	20,000
Mountain Ash Comprehensive	New main servery, oven, table & chairs and redecoration of Food Hall	70,000
St John Baptist CIW High	New dishwasher, oven, Induction Hob and refurbishment of staff changing room & toilet	65,000
Pontypridd High	New Combi Oven (Coffee Shop)	15,000
Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda	New Servery and Roller Shutter	30,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>280,000</b>

### **APPENDIX 2: Window and Door Replacements**

<b>Property/School</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Estimated Cost (£)</b>
Ton Junior School	Replacement doors	15,000
Parc Primary School	Replacement doors	15,000
Maes-y-coed Primary School	Replacement windows	80,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>110,000</b>

### **APPENDIX 3: Essential Works**

<b>Property/School</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Estimated Cost (£)</b>
Alternative Education Centre, Pontypridd	External masonry repairs, repointing	100,000
Maes-y-coed Primary School	Refurbishment of main hall	65,000
Penderyn Primary School	Retaining wall repairs	40,000
Parc Primary School	Retaining wall repairs	50,000

Property/School	Project	Estimated Cost (£)
Ysgol Garth Olwg	Replacement of canopy to Lifelong Learning Centre	30,000
Gwauncelyn Primary School	Drainage and ground works to school access	70,000
YGG Abercynon	Upgrading of external foundation areas	30,000
Glenboi Primary School	Replacement side canopy	35,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>420,000</b>

#### **APPENDIX 4: Electric Rewiring**

Property/School	Project	Estimated Cost (£)
Blaengwawr Primary School	Rewire	25,000
Trealaw Primary School	Rewire	50,000
Llanhari Primary School	Rewire	50,000
Various	Electrical works	15,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>140,000</b>

#### **APPENDIX 5: Fire Alarm Upgrades**

Property/School	Project	Estimated Cost (£)
Alternative Education Centre, Pontypridd	Fire alarm upgrades	15,000
Gwaunmeisgyn Primary	Fire alarm upgrades	20,000
Mountain Ash Comprehensive	Fire alarm upgrades	50,000
Trealaw Primary School	Fire alarm upgrades	15,000
Various	Fire alarm repair works	15,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>115,000</b>

**APPENDIX 6: Toilet Refurbishments**

<b>Property/School</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Estimated Cost (£)</b>
Gelli Primary School	Refurbishment Junior Girls toilets – Final phase	40,000
Maes-y-coed Primary School	Refurbishment Infant toilets and reconfiguration	60,000
Ton Pentre Infant School	Refurbishment Infant toilets – Phase 2	50,000
Ton Pentre Junior School	Toilet refurbishment	50,000
St Margaret's RC Primary School	Phase 2 refurbishment toilets	50,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>250,000</b>

**APPENDIX 7: Equalities Act/Compliance Works**

<b>Property/School</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Estimated Cost (£)</b>
Various Schools	Accessibility Improvements	70,000
Various Schools	Upgrading Hygiene Areas	35,000
Various Schools	Classroom Adaptations for Learning Support Classes	217,000
Various Schools	Acoustic Improvements for Learning Support Classes	35,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>357,000</b>

**APPENDIX 8: Boiler Replacement**

<b>Property/School</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Estimated Cost (£)</b>
Bryncelynog Comprehensive School	Complete boiler replacement to main block and the replacement of Ventilation/ Heating and Cooling in the Swimming Pool	162,000

Property/School	Project	Estimated Cost (£)
Caradog Primary School	Boiler replacement	60,000
Cwmlai Primary School	Boiler replacement	40,000
Hafod Primary School	Replace fan assisted heaters	60,000
Various Schools	Emergency boiler replacements	90,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>412,000</b>

### **APPENDIX 9: Roof Renewal**

Property/School	Project	Estimated Cost (£)
Miskin Primary School	Phase 2 – replacement roof	280,000
Hafod Primary School	Roof replacement	250,000
Ton Infant School	Roof replacement	175,000
YGG Evan James	Phase 2 – replacement roof	40,000
Cwmlai Primary School	Replacement fascias and gutters	50,000
Ffynnon Taf Primary School	Flat roof replacements	49,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>844,000</b>

### **APPENDIX 10: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Classroom Upgrades**

Property/School	Project	Estimated Cost (£)
Penrhys Primary School	Classroom upgrades	71,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>71,000</b>

**APPENDIX 11: Universal Free School Meals**

<b>Property/School</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Estimated Cost (£)</b>
Gwauncelyn Primary	Kitchen refurbishment	150,000
Llanhari Primary	Kitchen refurbishment	150,000
YGG Evan James	Extension & kitchen remodelling	250,000
Parc Primary	Kitchen refurbishment	150,000
Aberdare Park Primary School	Kitchen refurbishment	200,000
Pengeulan Primary	Kitchen refurbishment	150,000
Penrhiwceiber Primary	Kitchen refurbishment	150,000
Trehopcyn Primary	Kitchen relocation & refurbishment	200,000
Cwmdar Primary	Kitchen relocation & refurbishment	250,000
Maesycoed Primary	Kitchen relocation & refurbishment	174,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,824,000</b>

**APPENDIX 12: Additional Capital Funding Grant**

<b>Property/School</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Estimated Cost (£)</b>
Maesgwyn Special School	Construct a new extension to cater for growth in pupil numbers	1,500,000
Hawthorn High and Hawthorn Primary	Remodelling and refurbishment of both schools to complement the Band B investment for the new all through school	900,000
Learner Travel Route Improvements	Delivering improvements to the highway and pedestrian routes to support our new and existing schools	500,000
Cardinal Newman RC School	Improve facilities and learning environments	300,000
YGG Ynyswen	Create a Multi-use Games Area and outdoor space available for community use	150,000
Ferndale Community School	Phase 2 roof replacement	250,000
YGGG Llantrisant	Phase 2 roof replacement	150,000

Coed-y-Lan Primary School	Improve facilities and learning environments	100,000
Brynnau Primary School	Remedial works to roof including new fascia and soffits	50,000
Various	Energy efficiency and carbon reduction initiatives in various schools	152,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>4,052,000</b>





## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CABINET

27th MARCH 2023

### HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORTATION AND STRATEGIC PROJECTS SUPPLEMENTARY CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24

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

Author: Roger Waters, Director Frontline Services.

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

- 1.1 Further to the approval of the Council's Three-Year Capital Programme 2023/24 - 2025/26 on 8th March 2023 at Council, this report sets out the detailed capital programme for Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended Cabinet;

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

#### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 This report has been developed to identify the programme of commitments for RCT capital funding.
- 3.2 In recent years, the programme has been impacted by a number of external factors, including Covid19. Whilst some of these factors have abated, there are still significant challenges arising from; escalation of construction costs,

availability of skills and resources, intense activity on the network by statutory undertakers, Transport for Wales and others, competing for road space.

- 3.3 The Council's ambitious capital programme continues to be delivered alongside the significant additional and fully funded programme of work attributable to the destruction to infrastructure caused by Storm Dennis.
- 3.4 Despite these challenges, good progress has been made through 2022/23 in most areas. It is therefore prudent continue to maintain the flexibility to review projects on a case-by-case process around deliverability and risk; flexibility to suspend individual projects and commit resources to other projects within a programme will be key to maintaining momentum and value for money.
- 3.5 The unprecedented floods of February 2020 continue to represent a significant body of work in repairing and upgrading our infrastructure including bridges, roads, culverts and retaining walls, together with numerous landslides and ongoing legacy issues related to former coal tips.
- 3.6 Commitments have been made to providing funding to replace and upgrade this infrastructure, much of which will need to meet new expectations around flood events. Substantial grants have been secured from Welsh Government during the previous three financial years, with the Storm Dennis elements anticipated to come to a conclusion in 2023/24. Welsh Government Coal Tips related capital and revenue grants continue into 2023/24 with major works commencing on Phase 4 of Llanwonno Tip at Tylorstown, via a remediation contract with a value of circa £6M.
- 3.7 This report considers the detail against the specific 2023/24 RCT capital allocations of £10.725M in favour of Highways Technical Services and £16.940M in favour of Strategic Projects, in order to safeguard the long-term integrity of the highways and transportation network and to enhance the network to deal with evolving travel demands. Specific regard is given to promoting safer and more sustainable travel and to enabling economic activity. Detail for consideration is submitted under the following areas;
- Highways Improvements
  - Land Drainage/Flood Risk Improvements
  - Traffic Management
  - Car Parks
  - Transportation Infrastructure
  - Making Better Use Programme (MBU)
  - Unadopted Roads
- 3.8 The Council has submitted bids for Welsh Government Grants for transport projects related to;
- Implementing the Welsh Government 20mph initiative
  - Road Safety Revenue
  - Safe Routes in the Community
  - Active Travel
  - Local Transport Fund (including Resilient Roads)
- 3.9 The Council continues to be heavily engaged in the Cardiff Capital Region City

Deal, supporting the £734M allocated to Metro, a significant proportion of which will deliver electrification of the Treherbert, Aberdare and Merthyr rail lines with 4 trains per hour to the top of each line, now programmed for completion in 2024.

3.10 Progress is also being made on the £50M Metro Plus Programme, which will see the completion of a new transport hub at Porth during 2023. The Cardiff Capital Region Transport Authority (CCRTA) has bid for funding towards development of a potential second phase of Metro Plus, within which, consideration is being given to extending rail services beyond Aberdare to Hirwaun.

3.11 During the 2022/23 Financial Year, significant sums of grant funding have been secured via the Regional Local Transport Fund allocation. Studies have progressed related to;

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

3.12 These projects are the subject of grant applications via the CCRTA for continued development during 2023/24. A contract has been let to provide electric vehicle charging points at 31 car parks across RCT, with a further 28 car parks to receive charge points from April 2023. Options to provide of the order of 10 onstreet charge points are being explored. Further work is ongoing to establish a car club across the region utilising electric vehicles.

## **4 SUPPLEMENTARY CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

### **4.1 Highways Improvements**

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

4.1.2 The network has now benefitted from twelve years of enhanced levels of investment, and this will continue into 2023/24.

4.1.3 The total allocation of capital resources for the Highways Improvement Schemes, as included in the Capital Programme for 2023/24, is £10.725M and is broken down into works packages in the table below. This includes previously reported slippage of £4.270M of Highway & Parks Structures funding. Spending plans for this programme of works are detailed in this report.

<b>Work Area</b>	<b>£M</b>
Carriageways	4.014

Footways	0.486
Unadopted Roads	0.300
Structures	4.450
Parks Structures	0.780
Street Lighting	0.540
Traffic Management	0.110
Car Parks	0.045
<b>Total</b>	<b>10.725</b>

4.1.4 **Carriageways**; A programme of identified carriageway resurfacing and surface treatment to the value of £3.449M will be funded in 2023/24 which includes a specific significant element related to Rhigos Mountain Road Rock Netting Installation. A pool of schemes has been previously approved and a further £2.449M proposed schemes to be added to this pool are listed in Appendix 1. The actual schemes to be implemented in 2023/24 will be drawn from the approved pool based on officer prioritisation and deliverability constraints. These identified schemes will be supplemented by £0.500M to carry out minor surface repairs (larger patches), £0.05M of safety barrier work and £0.015M of disabled access improvements (dropped kerbs) (N.B. these are specific disabled access interventions – where applicable all schemes will routinely upgrade or provide disabled access improvements), making up the allocated sum for carriageways of £4.014M.

4.1.5 **Footways**; are considered to be a high risk to the Council. An identified programme of resurfacing and surface treatment to the value of £0.486M will be funded in 2023/24. A pool of schemes has been previously approved and this will be supplemented with the list of footway schemes included at Appendix 1. The actual schemes to be implemented in 2023/24 will be drawn from this pool based on officer prioritisation and deliverability constraints.

4.1.6 **Unadopted Roads**; Building on the funding allocated in 2021/22 and continued through 2022/23, a further £0.300M is allocated to unadopted roads to enable more streets to be made up to adoptable standards and formally adopted as highways maintainable at public expense. The list of streets proposed to be made up is included at Appendix 1.

4.1.7 **Street Lighting**; the allocation of £0.540M is split to enable £0.400M to be invested in Traffic Signals refurbishment and £0.140M towards street lighting. Traffic Signals funding will be allocated to installations that require modernising. Streetlighting allocation will go towards an ongoing programme of column replacement and replacement of the Council's network of supply cables.

4.1.8 **Highway Structures**; There are significant challenges associated with maintaining highway structures with a number of structures in a critical condition. A total budget of £4.450M (including £1.840M of previously identified slippage from 2022/23) has been allocated for 2023/24. A full list of proposed schemes can be found in Appendix 1 Table 2. Project Management Costs will be allocated appropriately.

4.1.9 **Brook Street Footbridge**, adjacent to Ystrad rail station is substantially completed and has been supplemented by WG grant funding for Active Travel.

Any of the funding allocation to this project which can be released, will be diverted to the schemes identified in Appendix 1 as Reserve Schemes Previously Prepared or the Parks Pool Schemes.

4.1.10 A number of challenges affected scheme delivery in 2022/23 including staff resources, weather, access constraints and site changes. Imperial Bridge Refurbishment, Bodringallt Bridge, Confined Space Culvert Repairs are schemes with some funding slippage into 2023/24 and with additional allocation where necessary.

4.1.11 **Graig Las Bridge Repairs** is to be funded from 2023/24 capital allocation. The bridge carries the A4063 over the river Ogwr Fach in Hendreforgan. The works will refurbish and repair the structure.

4.1.12 **Lanelay Bridge** is a masonry arch bridge that carries Lanelay Road over the river Ely near to its junction with the A473 roundabout. The proposed works in 2023/24 is a full refurbishment of the stone masonry including vegetation clearance and repointing.

4.1.13 A number of highway structures schemes have been prepared for future implementation should additional funding become available. These schemes are listed in Appendix 1 Tables 3 and 4. This includes advanced preparation for works as Structures schemes have long lead in times whilst determining the scope for repairs and/or replacements.

4.1.14 **Parks Structures:** A budget of £0.250M is allocated in 2023/24 in addition to the £0.530M being carried forward from 2022/23. The outline funding allocation is shown in Table 5. Works to repair **Colliery Street Footbridge** in Trehafod will progress in 2023/24. A pool of schemes from which projects will be taken forward is given in Appendix 1 - Table 6. The programme of works will be supplemented by an allocation of £0.080M for Project Management costs.

4.1.15 **Storm Dennis:** A number of Highway and Parks and Countryside structures and embankments were damaged during Storm Dennis. A £20.109M budget is assigned to this for 2023/24 funded by WG. Castle Inn Footbridge Replacement and Berw Road Bridge (White Bridge) are currently in progress on site. Tynybryn Footbridge and Embankment and Feeder Pipe Footbridge are at detailed design stage.

4.1.16 The list of structures known to be affected by Storm Dennis are included in Appendix 1 - Table 7 for reference.

## 4.2 Land Drainage/Flood Risk Improvements

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

4.2.2 With regard to land drainage (Flood Alleviation) schemes, the Council is frequently able to benefit from Welsh Government (WG) grant support (85%)

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

- 4.2.3 Progression of schemes will be dependent on successful application for grant following the 5-case business model process through Strategic Outline Case (SOC), Outline Business Case (OBC) and Full Business Case (FBC) and where appropriate a Business Justification Case (BJC). An allowance has been made within the drainage improvements programme for progression of such business cases and schemes in order to provide the required match funding.
- 4.2.4 Appendix 2a identifies the business cases and projects currently under development. Projects identified on the Welsh Government pipeline for capital investment in Land Drainage/Flood Risk Improvements have been submitted for inclusion for 2023/24 at approx. £4M, and await confirmation of approval in principle, also pending business case approval. Grant Bids have also been submitted for 15 Small Scales Schemes at approx. £1.3M. Over £3.6m was allocated in grant to RCT during in 2022/23
- 4.2.5 Appendix 2b identifies projects which had a grant bid submitted to the Welsh Government in February 2023 for Resilient Roads Fund grant with a value of £2.7m for 2023/24. This is the fourth year that councils have had the opportunity to secure funding aimed at mitigating the effects of Climate Change on the transportation network. £0.400M was allocated to RCT during 2022/23.
- 4.2.6 As these bids are centred on areas of high flood risk to the network, they are included in this section. Progression of the projects will be dependent on grant confirmation.
- 4.2.7 The details of the Drainage/Flood Risk Improvements Programme for 2023/24 with £0.750M of funding allocated which consists of £0.623M of Council funding and £0.127M of secured grant is provided in Appendix 2.

### **4.3 Traffic Management**

- 4.3.1 As part of its network management duties under the Traffic Management Act and the Highways Act, the Council has the ability to implement improvements to the management of traffic within the County Borough. Finance for the programme is provided by an allocation of core capital funding of £0.110M.
- 4.3.2 The Council's capital allocation will enable the implementation of small scale schemes and provide safety aids such as warning signs, the introduction of traffic orders and the provision of residents parking. Details of the 2023/24 Capital Programme are included in Appendix 3.
- 4.3.3 Traditional Welsh Government Road Safety Capital Funding has effectively been suspended for a second year in 2023/24 in favour of focusing on

implementing the Welsh Government default 20mph programme which will come into effect on 17 September 2023. RCT has submitted a bid to Welsh Government to cover anticipated 2023/24 costs amounting to approximately £2.4M. This will be a significant delivery challenge which is partially accommodated with a reduction in the Council's own Traffic Management Capital programme funding.

#### **4.4 Car Parks**

4.4.1 An ongoing programme of repairs and upgrades to the Council's car parks will continue with a £0.045M allocation in 2023/24.

#### **4.5 Transportation Infrastructure**

4.5.1 The total allocation for Transport Infrastructure for 2023/24 in the Capital Programme amounts to £16.173M.

4.5.2 The most substantive allocations of annual funding are typically allocated towards the progression of a programme of major economic infrastructure investments across RCT. Two of our prioritised schemes; Llanharan Link Road and A465 Cynon Gateway North, have been subject to the "Roads Review" process initiated by Welsh Government.

4.5.3 On 14<sup>th</sup> February, the Welsh Government published the advice from the Welsh Government appointed panel "*The Future of Road Investment in Wales*" together with a report titled "*Welsh Government Response to the Roads Review*" and the "*National Transport Delivery Plan*."

4.5.4 Whilst the recommendations of the Roads Review Panel are unfavourable related to the two projects, it remains the case that major interventions are required to mitigate significant traffic and transportation related challenges that exist and will multiply in both cases as a result of planned infrastructure and committed housing development.

4.5.5 The Council will seek to work closely with Welsh Government to enable sustainable solutions to be identified that overcome these challenges and promote sustainable growth and economic activity.

On that basis, the following allocations are made;

- **Llanharan Transit Corridor - £5.058M**
- **A465 Cynon Gateway Transit Corridor £1.351M**

#### **4.5.6 Dualling A4119 Coedely to Ynysmaerdy - £8.127M**

Alun Griffiths Contractors Ltd is making good progress on site. Welsh Government determined that this project was outside the scope of the Roads Review having already substantially commenced physical works. The project benefits from £11.417M Levelling Up Fund Grant from Central UK Government, which is in addition to previous years funding from Welsh

Government. The scheme is scheduled for completion in the summer of 2024.

#### **4.5.7 Gelli Treorchy Link Road - £0.363M**

In light of the recent publication of the Welsh Government Roads Review and the introduction of new policy tests for road building, the challenges facing the Rhondda Fawr, in particular those related to Stag Square, Treorchy will be reviewed. The purpose of the review will be to revisit the issues and establish sustainable objectives to address this ongoing problem.

#### **4.5.8 Park and Ride Programme - £0.730M**

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

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

### **4.6 Making Better Use (MBU) and Miscellaneous Improvements - £0.544M**

4.6.1 The Council continues to invest in a Making Better Use (MBU) and Miscellaneous Improvement programme. The ethos of this programme is to identify, design and deliver a series of low cost, high value miscellaneous improvements to deal with a number of operational issues covering safety, accessibility, efficiency, enhancements to bus corridors and the propensity to travel actively, including joint working with partners to resolve local accessibility and connectivity related issues. An element of this work will focus on the A4059 corridor.

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

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

## **6 CONSULTATION**

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

## **7 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**



- 8.1 The funding allocation to support schemes contained within this report was agreed by Council on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2023 as part of the three-year Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2025/26. This report does not commit any additional spend over and above this agreed allocation.

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

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

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

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

## **11 CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 The above programme continues the enhanced levels of investment under the RCTInvest initiative, helping to sustain the resilience and durability of our highways and transportation infrastructure, promoting sustainable transport opportunities and network efficiency.
- 11.2 Consequently, Frontline Services will coordinate and deliver significant investment in a number of important areas during 2023/24 and the proposed programme is accordingly recommended for approval.
- 11.3 Whilst RCT is one of the few Councils that continues to make meaningful and significant investments in its highway network since the demise of Welsh Government roads maintenance funding, the lack of additional Welsh Government support is beginning to impact on the resilience of the road network. The table below demonstrates the level of progress that has been made since 2010/11, but our B and C roads are not as resilient as reported last year with extremely wet and cold weather a major factor in road condition and ongoing maintenance.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>2010/11 Indicator</b>	<b>2022/23 Indicator</b>
THS011a – percentage of A class roads requiring maintenance	16.2%	3.7%
THS011b – percentage of B class roads requiring maintenance	15.2%	5.7%
THS011c – percentage of C class roads requiring maintenance	15.3%	3.7%
THS012 – percentage of all classified roads requiring maintenance	15.7%	3.6%

- 11.4 The Council, in common with all LAs across the UK faces significant challenges in maintaining this enormous and complex asset. The indicators above are directly impacted by the levels of funding available to maintain the asset. Whilst there is clearly a level of funding required in maintaining asset condition in a steady state, reducing funding below an optimum level creates greater challenges for the future. The ongoing level of RCT investment respects that principle but it is a fine balance.
- 11.5 The commitment of the Council to invest in transport infrastructure enables the Council to be able to engage with Welsh Government and provide flexibility to accommodate WG underspend. However, whilst funding for Flood Risk, Trip Safety, Active Travel and the Welsh Government 20mph initiative continue to meet our immediate needs, traditional Welsh Government Transportation Grant funding, including Resilient Roads Funding is severely depleted, reducing the availability of underspend.
- 11.6 The outcomes of the Welsh Government Roads Review present new challenges and opportunities and we will work with Welsh Government to identify sustainable solutions to the very real problems that remain to be addressed. The allocations in this report renew and underline our continued intent in this regard.
- 11.7 The programme is as always subject to minor changes due to possible engineering difficulties or programming and coordination issues with statutory undertakers. Programme delivery will still be immensely challenging due to supply chain challenges and cost escalation, the flexibility to switch funding across programmes will ensure the best outcomes for RCT.

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## **Appendix 1**

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

<b>Town</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Budget</b>
Gelli	Colwyn Street	58,125.00
Maerdy	North Terrace	63,375.00
Porth	S/O 90 Cemetery Road	18,000.00
Penygraig	Tylacelyn Road	262,500.00
Pontypridd	West Street	65,000.00
Graig	Union Street	75,000.00
Pantygraig-wen	Ty-Mawr Road	20,625.00
Tonypandy	Court Street to End North	25,000.00
Penrhiwfer	Office Row	48,750.00
Penrhiwfer	Pleasant View	75,000.00
Cwmparc	Ocean Street	20,625.00
Ynysybwl	Cyncoed	59,625.00
Treforest	St Michaels Avenue	69,750.00
Maerdy	Maxwell Street	76,875.00
Godreaman	Fforchneol Row	87,375.00
Pontypridd	Crossbrook Street	30,000.00
Rhydyfelin	Maesfield Way	16,875.00
Glyncoch	Cefn Lane	71,250.00
Williamstown	Rowling Street	42,000.00
Clydach	North Terrace	28,125.00
Cymmer	Gwaun Bedw	153,750.00
Ferndale	Rear Wood Street	22,125.00
Aberaman	Mount Hill Street	29,250.00
Cwmbach	Bethania Place	37,500.00
Mountain Ash	Thomas Street	110,000.00
Cilfynydd	Batten Way	49,000.00
Graig	Leyshon Street	64,500.00
Pontyclun	Maelog Close	58,125.00
Church Village	Llanerch Goed	30,000.00
Tonypandy	Church Street	37,500.00
Tonypandy	St. Andrews Court	16,125.00
Trealaw	Garth Road	45,000.00
Aberdare	Mary Street	21,750.00
Cwmbach	Gower Road	30,000.00

Mountain Ash	Woodland Terrace	19,875.00
Mountain Ash	Woodland Street	45,000.00
Penygraig	Vale View	27,375.00
Aberaman	Beddoe Street	15,000.00
Aberdare	Pendarren Street	23,250.00
Pontypridd	Berw Road	200,000.00
Porth	Porth Bypass	200,000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2,449,000.00</b>

**Table 1b Additional Schemes for Including in the Footway Works Pool**

<b>Town</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Budget</b>
Llwynypia	Tynytyla Avenue	32,000.00
Trealaw	Garth Road	32,000.00
Ystrad	Brook Street	5,500.00
Ynyshir	Thomas Place	12,500.00
Ferndale	Wood Street	18,500.00
Blaenllechau	Blaenllechau Road	18,500.00
Penygraig	James Street	12,000.00
Penygraig	Greenfield Street	21,000.00
Talbot Green	Danygraig Drive	60,500.00
Pontyclun	School Street	38,500.00
Talbot Green	Bridgend Road	24,000.00
Tonteg	Briar Way	28,000.00
Tyntetown	Homerton Street	14,000.00
Cwmbach	Bryn Glas	33,500.00
Cwmdare	Ael y Bryn	28,000.00
Penywaun	Gwladys Street	22,500.00
Tonyrefail	Access improvements	20,000.00
Gadlys	Access improvements	20,000.00
Porth	Hannah Street	35,000.00
Clydach Vale	Steps at Wern Street	10,000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>486,000.00</b>

**Table 1c Unadopted Roads Schemes**

<b>Town</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Budget</b>
Tonyrefail	Highlands	126,000.00
Ystrad	Red Rose Hill	27,000.00
Llwydcoed	Horeb Terrace	63,000.00
Penrhiwfer	Lewis Arms Row	36,000.00
Hirwaun	Richmond Drive	48,000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>300,000.00</b>

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

<b>Street/Road</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Budget (£)</b>
A4061	Bodringallt Bridge	Ystrad	275,000
	Brook Street Footbridge	Ystrad	470,000
Eirw Rd	Imperial Bridge	Porth	760,000
A4063	Graig Las Bridge	Hendreforgan	310,000
Lanelay Road	Lanelay Bridge	Talbot Green	525,000
Various	Confined Space Culvert Repairs	Various	290,000
Various	Retaining Wall Refurbishment	Various	380,000
A4061	Rhigos Road Rock Anchors	Blaenrhondda	260,000
A4059	A4059 Active Travel Route	Aberdare	450,000
	Glyncoch Embankment	Glyncoch	400,000
	Project Management		160,000
	Advanced Preparation		170,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>£4,450,000</b>

**Table 3 Reserve Highway Structures Schemes (including Retaining Walls for Refurbishment and Confined Space Culverts for Repair)**

<b>Street/Road</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Town</b>
U/C	Brewery Terrace Wall	Pontygwaith
A4058	Salem Terrace Wall	Llwynypia
A4058	Dinas R/Wall	Dinas
U/C	Bryn Eirw Wall	Trehafod
U/C	Darren Ddu Bridge	Ynysybwl
Adjacent to A4059	Robertstown Footbridge Approach walls	Robertstown
U/C	Cross Bychan Bridge	Croesbychan
U/C	Margaret Street Wall and Embankment ( <i>applied for grant funding</i> )	Pontygwaith
B4595	Trefforest Garage Wall	Trefforest
	Avon Street Retaining Wall	Ferndale
	Long Row Retaining Wall	Blaenllechau
	Glanffrwyd Culvert	Rhigos

	Beechwood Road Culvert	
Rhigos Rd	Bwlfa Road Culvert No. 1	Rhigos
	Riverside Footbridge ( <i>possible contribution towards Active Travel Grant</i> )	Aberdare

**Table 4 Structures Considered for Advanced Preparation Work**

Street	Structure	Location
U/C	Margaret Street (applied for grant funding)	Pontygwaith
	William Edwards Bridge	Pontypridd
B4275	Cynon Star Bridge	Abercynon
A4058	A4058 Cantilever	Pontypridd
B4278	Brittania Bridge	Porth
B4278	Rheola Bridge	Porth
A4233	New Rheola Bridge	Porth
	Machine Bridge North	Trefforest
B4595	Machine Bridge South	Trefforest
B4223	Gelli Culvert	Gelli
	Llanwonno Road Railway Bridge (over cycle route)	Ynysir
A4059	Meirion Street River Underbridge	Aberdare
	Glan Road Bridge	Aberdare
A4059	Afon Cynon Bridge	Cwmbach/Aberdare
	Factory Road Culvert	Treorchy
A4058	Trehafod By-Pass Bridge	Trehafod
C229	Dinas Riverbridge	Dinas
	Mountain Ash Comprehensive Bridge	Mountain Ash
	Nant Llanilid Footbridge	Thomastown
Moy Road	Glan y Llyn Bridge	Taff's Well
B4273	Graig Bridge	Ynysybwll
Ynysir Rd	Wattstown Stone Arch Bridge	Wattstown
A4233	Pontygwaith Riverbridge	Pontygwaith
	Cwm Pennar Bridge	Cwmpennar
A4054	Nant Llonydd Bridge	Hawthorn
	Leiners Bridge and Footbridge	Hawthorn
N/A	Nantgywyddon to Gelligaled Park Footbridge	Llwynypia
N/A	Nantgywyddon to Sherwood Street Footbridge	Llwynypia
B4275	Mountain Ash Town Bridges	Mountain Ash
C221	Ferndale Bridge	Ferndale
A4059	Violet Street Footbridge	Aberaman

**Table 5 Proposed Parks Structures**

Street No	Street Name	Town	Budget (£)
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	Project Management		80,000
N/A	Colliery Street Footbridge	Trehafod	430,000
	Advanced Preparation		70,000
	To be allocated to schemes		200,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>780,000</b>

**Table 6 Pool of Parks and Countryside Projects**

Penrhys Playing Fields Footbridge	Penrhys
Ynyshir Park Tunnel	Ynyshir
Gelli Isaf Tramroad Bridge Phase 2	Aberdare
Dare Valley Retaining Walls	Aberdare
Timber Footbridge	Various
Barry Sidings Retaining Wall Phase 2	Hopkinstown
Cwm Ynys Mintan Footbridge	Penywaun
Blaennantygroes Retaining Wall	Cwmbach

**Table 7 Structures Affected by Storm Dennis and anticipated to be fully funded by Welsh Government (*in italics works is wholly completed*)**

<b><u>Structure Name</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>
<i>Ynysyngharad Park Footbridge</i>	<i>Pontypridd</i>
Castle Inn Bridge	Rhydyfelin/Treforest
Berw Road Bridge	Pontypridd
Feeder Pipe Footbridge	Abercynon
Footbridges on Rights of Way	Various
Ty'n y Bryn Footbridge	Tonyrefail
Taff Trail Mill Farm Rd footbridge	Abercynon
Penydarren Tramroadside	Aberdare
<i>Bailey Street Bridge</i>	<i>Ton Pentre</i>
<i>Canning Street Bridge</i>	<i>Ton Pentre</i>
Maindy Street Bridge	Ton Pentre

Gelligaled Footbridge	Ystrad
<i>Merlin Bridge</i>	<i>Hopkinstown</i>
Campbell Terrace Culvert	Mountain Ash
Blaencwm River Wall	Blaencwm
Hopkinstown River Wall	Hopkinstown
Berw Rd River Wall	Pontypridd
Sion Street	Pontypridd
<i>Castle Inn River Wall</i>	<i>Rhydyfelin</i>
Pontypridd Road River Wall	Porth
Tonypandy River Wall	Tonypandy
Brook Street Retaining Wall	Porth
<i>Ynysymeurig Wall and Bridge</i>	<i>Abercynon</i>
<i>Maerdy Mountain Road A4223</i>	<i>Maerdy/Aberdare</i>
<i>Ynyshir Community Route Landslip</i>	<i>Ynyshir</i>
<i>Taff Trail and other Active Travel Routes</i>	<i>Various</i>
Nant Gelliwion Bridge	Penycoedcae
Mill Road Culvert	Ynysybwl
<i>Cross Street R/Wall</i>	<i>Ynyshir</i>
<i>Nant Clydach Bridge</i>	<i>Abercynon</i>
Gyfeillion R/Wall	Hopkinstown
Gelli Culvert	Gelli
<i>Afon Dar and Tramway Culverts</i>	<i>Aberdare</i>
Rural Lanes - Storm Damage Repairs	Various
Various repairs and works to culverts, bridges and walls and landslips/embankments	Various



## Appendix 2

### Proposed Land Drainage/ Flood Risk Management Capital Programme 2023/24

<b>Scheme/Location</b>	<b>Activity/Work</b>	<b>RCT</b>	<b>WG Grant/ other</b>	<b>Total</b>
		<b>£k</b>	<b>£k</b>	<b>£k</b>
Land Drainage Improvements Allowance (match Funding) for progression of schemes after completion of Strategic Business Case/Small Scale schemes Business Case Assumes WG Approval. See Appendix 2A	OBC/BJC/FBC & Works (15% Match Funding)	575	3,258*	3,833*
Glenboi Pumping Station	Construction	23	127**	150
Strategic Outline Business Cases	Production of Strategic Business Cases for future projects. Incl Concept/Prelim Design	5		5
Mynydd-Yr-Eglwys, Ystrad	Monitoring & Remedial Works	10		10
Small Works Budget	Small scale works <£10,000 to reduce impact of surface water flows affecting properties and the highway	10		10
<b>Total</b>		<b>623</b>	<b>3,385*</b>	<b>4,008*</b>

\*Assumes successful grant bids

\*\* Grant already secured.

## Appendix 2a

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

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

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Activity/Work (2022/23)</b> BJC = Business Justification Case OBC – Outline Business Case FBC- Full Business Case
Treorchy FAS - (Phase 2)	Treorchy	FBC - Detailed Design and Development
Cwmaman Phase 2	Aberaman South	Full BJC - Construction
Pentre FAS	Pentre	FBC - Detailed Design and Development
Turberville Rd - Porth	Porth	Full BJC - Detailed Design and Development
Maes y Ffynon FAS	Aberaman North	Full BJC - Detailed Design and Development
Nant Gwawr (Phase 2)	Aberaman North	FBC - Detailed Design and Development
Abertonllwyd Road	Treherbert	FBC - Detailed Design and Development
Cwmbach Canal FAS	Cwmbach	OBC Development– Preliminary Design & Development.

Trehafod FAS	Trehafod	OBC Development– Preliminary Design & Development.
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**Schemes under development that will require a successful application for Grant from the Welsh Government.**

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

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Activity/Work (2022/23)</b> BJC = Business Justification Case OBC – Outline Business Case FBC- Full Business Case
Afon Cynon/Wellington St FAS - OBC/NFM	Aberdare	FBC - Detailed Design and Development
Cefn Pennar Road - FAS	Cwmbach	BJC - Preliminary Design & Development.
Peat Bogs Restoration - OBC/NFM	Unknown at this Stage	FBC - Detailed Design and Development
Gwernifor And Kingscraft St - FAS	Mt Ash	Full BJC - Construction
Tirfounder/Bro Teg Road - Phase 2	Cwmbach	Full BJC - Construction
Arfyn Terr, Tylorstown - FAS	Tylorstown & Ynyshir	FBC - Detailed Design and Development

<b>Small Scale Projects &lt;£200k Individual Flood Alleviation Schemes (FAS)</b>		
Scheme	Location	Activity/Work
Jones Street - Culvert Relining	Treorchy	Design Completed 22-23 - Rehabilitation of the structural condition (GR5) of the ordinary watercourse Culvert - Approximately
Dyffryn Road	Mt Ash	Design Completed 22-23 - Replacement of culvert
Telemetry	Various	Expansion of the Ordinary watercourse Telemetry across RCT
Nant Cae Dudwg - Inlet Upgrade	Cilfynydd	Design Completed 22-23 - Addition of Overflow system to existing headwall. Inlet Upgrade - Overflow structure
Nant Y Fedw - Scour Repair	Abercynon	Design Completed 22-23 - Culvert Inlet access has deteriorated and eroded and channel has scoured - rehabilitation of channel and revised access provision
Baglan Street - Culvert Relining	Treorchy	Design Completed 22-23 - Rehabilitation of the structural condition (GR5) of the ordinary watercourse Culvert - Approximately
Afryn Terrace	Ferndale	Structural Rehabilitation of Channel scour and Upgrade of Ordinary Watercourse Inflow structures, with overland flood routing features
Heath Terrace (Central Inlet) – <b>(Design Only)</b>	Ynyshir	Culvert upgrade to mitigate impact of debris blockage - Channel Scour Rehabilitation
Penrhys Rd <b>(Design Only)</b>	Ystrad	Inlet identified as highly sensitive to debris restrictions - design work to develop a more resilient Inlet structure
Brook Street – Blaenrhondda <b>(Design Only)</b>	Treherbert	Design - Upgrade the inlet and channel to better accommodate debris control and maintenance improvements
Victor Street - Mt Ash <b>(Design Only)</b>	Mt ash	Structural Lining & Rehabilitation of an Ordinary Watercourse Culvert Network
Tynywaun - Relining <b>(Design Only)</b>	Treherbert	Structural Lining & Rehabilitation of an Ordinary Watercourse Culvert Network
Llwyncelyn Industrial Estate	Porth	Design Completed 22-23 - Culvert and channel Upgrade for debris control & improved maintenance access
Ynyshir Road	Tylorstown & Ynyshir	Structural Lining & Rehabilitation of an Ordinary Watercourse Culvert Network

## Appendix 2b

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

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

Scheme	Location	Activity/Work
A4058 Tonypandy - Porth (RV3)	Trealaw/Porth	Existing Highway Carrier Line (filter system) is showing significant root mass within the main system approximately 540m which is reducing the capacity of the carrier line to function resulting in frequent Highway Flooding
A4058 Tonypandy - Porth (RV4)	Trealaw/Porth	Existing Highway Carrier Line (filter system) is showing significant root mass within the main system approximately 550m which is reducing the capacity of the carrier line to function resulting in frequent Highway Flooding
A4119 Bypass Ynysgrug - Tonypandy - Coedely (RV7)	Tonyrefail West	Plastic Carrier Line has significant defects i.e root ingress and displaced joints through the length of the network - partial surveys undertaken
Margaret Street, Pontygwaith (RV15)	Tylorstown	Recovery works to stabilise the hillside and improve ground water drainage to avoid further flooding impacts to the highway
Lewis Street (New)	Aberaman North	Works to upgrade a Highway culverted watercourse, which will include the structural upgrade of the internal culvert barrel and improvements to the associated inflow gully structures and connections
St Luke's Road, Llwynceilyn (New)	Porth	<b>Design Only</b> - Works to upgrade a Highway Culvert inlet which will include works to the Headwall, debris screens and associated access
Mill Street (New)	Tonyrefail East	<b>Design Only</b> - Works to upgrade a Highway channel/ditch will include works to the upgrade the channel width, depth and banks and associated works to upgrade debris screens within the channel
Ynyshir Road (New)	Ynyshir	<b>Design Only</b> - Works to upgrade the highway drainage infrastructure, via the upgrading of the highway carrier line and associated inflow gully structures
Llanwonno Road (New)	Ynyshir	Structural Lining of Ordinary Watercourse Culvert

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

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

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Activity/Work</b>
Llwyncelyn Industrial Estate (New)	Porth	Ordinary watercourse rehabilitation and inlet improvements
Cymmer Road	Porth	<b>Design Only</b> - Ordinary watercourse rehabilitation and highway drainage improvements to manage overland flows affecting the A road.
A4058 Gyfeillion Rd (New)	Cymmer	Structural repair to the A4058 Highway drainage carrier network, including patch repairs and structural lining works.
A4058 Trehafod (New)	Cymmer	Low spot is improvements to better accommodate the overland flow from 3 ordinary watercourse culverts along with the accumulation of surface water within the highway
Cemetery Road (New)	Porth	Limited drainage within the highway - Installation of a new Carrier line and associated gullies over a length of 56m
Tirfounder Road (New)	Cwmbach	Channel scour and access Improvements
B4223 - Nant Y Gwyddion Road (New)	Llwynypia	<b>Design Only</b> - Undertake repairs and improvements to the connection between the amalgamated highway drainage and ordinary watercourse network conveying along the B4223
Kensington drive (New)	Porth	<b>Design Only</b> - Ground water emerging from below footpath/highway resulting in pooling and freezing within the highway - Works to install land drain in footway approx. 56m
Trebanog Road (New)	Trebanog	Limited drainage within the highway - Installation of a new Carrier line and associated gullies over a length of 172m
B4278 Gilfach Road (New)	Tonyrefail West	Works to upgrade the highway drainage infrastructure, via the upgrading of the highway carrier line and associated inflow gully structures

### **Appendix 3 – Proposed Traffic Management Programme 2023/24**

<b>Traffic Management Programme 2023/24</b>	<b>Cost (£)</b>
Disabled Persons Parking Permits	10,000
Minor schemes, signs and markings	25,000
Collision Cluster and Capital Programme Review	2,000
Small scale traffic regulation orders (Speed limit, Road Safety and community benefit)	20,000
Residents Parking Review	40,000
Speed Limit Review	4,000
Remedial works resulting from Safety Audits on previous schemes	4,000
Development of schemes	5,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>110,000</b>

In addition to the above the Traffic Management team will be responsible for implementing the Welsh Government default 20mph initiative over 2023/24 as well as delivering several Education and Lifelong Learning funded projects throughout the borough including the highway elements of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme.



## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CABINET

27<sup>th</sup> March 2023

#### COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 (Quarter 3)

#### REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE & GROUP DIRECTOR – FINANCE, DIGITAL & FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR LEYSHON)

**AUTHOR: Paul Griffiths, Service Director – Finance and Improvement  
Services (01443) 680609**

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

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an overview of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective, based on the first nine-months of this financial year (to the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022).

#### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the context of the Council's Services continuing to manage the on-going effects of communities recovering from the pandemic and the United Kingdom wide cost-of-living crisis, both of which are contributing to increases in demand for many services and significant inflationary cost pressures.

#### **Revenue**

- 2.2 Note and agree the General Fund revenue outturn position of the Council as at the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 (Section 2 of the Executive Summary).

#### **Capital**

- 2.3 Note the capital outturn position of the Council as at the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 (Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary).
- 2.4 Note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 (Section 3f of the Executive Summary).

## **Corporate Plan Priorities**

- 2.5 Note the Quarter 3 progress updates for the Council's Corporate Plan priorities (Sections 5 a – c of the Executive Summary).
- 2.6 Note the progress update to enhance the Council's short term and long-term response to extreme weather events (Section 6 of the Executive Summary).
- 2.7 Note the progress update in respect of the Council's response to tackling Climate Change (Section 7 of the Executive Summary).

## **3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To agree the Council's financial and operational performance position as at the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 to enable elected Members and other stakeholders to scrutinise the performance of the Council.

## **4.0 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 This report provides Members with the third update of the Council's financial and operational performance position for the financial year ending the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.
- 4.2 The aim of the report is to bring together the Council's performance into an Executive Summary and make available more detailed information to the reader through electronic links. Information contained in the Executive Summary includes financial data, progress against our Corporate Plan priorities (with exceptions highlighted within the detailed sections to ensure that elected Members and other readers are able to quickly identify the key issues) and progress updates in respect of enhancing the Council's response to extreme weather events and to tackle climate change.
- 4.3 The report is set in the context of the on-going impact of Covid-19 and cost-of-living crisis, both of which are contributing to significant increases in demand and cost pressures across a number of services. Members will note that the Welsh Government Covid-19 Hardship Fund, that funded the majority of additional expenditure and income losses incurred as a result of the pandemic, ceased from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 with the requirement for local authorities to manage any on-going service and financial implications from within existing resources. Within this very challenging and changing environment, the Council is maintaining its focus on frontline service delivery, in line with Corporate Plan priorities, to help support the needs of residents and businesses.
- 4.4 Further information on the above position together with the proactive steps being taken by the Council are included within the Executive Summary.

## 5.0 **QUARTER 3 REPORT**

5.1 The Quarter 3 report is attached and comprises:

- **Executive Summary** – setting out, at a glance, the overall performance of the Council as at Quarter 3 (i.e. 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022).
- **Revenue Monitoring** – sections 2a – e setting out the detailed projected financial spend against budget across our Revenue Budget with exceptions highlighted.
- **Capital Monitoring** – sections 3a – e setting out capital spend across our Capital Programme with exceptions highlighted and section 3f covering Prudential Indicators.
- **Organisational Health** – includes information on turnover, sickness absence, organisational health related investment areas and Council strategic risks.
- **[Corporate Plan](#) Priorities** – three action plans (Sections 5a – c) setting out progress updates for the priorities of People, Places and Prosperity.
- **Enhancing the Council’s response to extreme weather events** - Section 6 setting out progress made to implement the recommendations agreed by Cabinet on [18th December 2020](#).
- **Tackling Climate Change** – Section 7 setting out the work being progressed across services to support the delivery of the Council’s [Climate Change Strategy ‘Think Climate RCT’](#).

## 6.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS AND SOCIOECONOMIC DUTY**

6.1 The Council’s Performance Report provides an update on financial and operational performance for the first 9-months of 2022/23; as a result, there are no equality and diversity or socio-economic duty implications to report.

## 7.0 **CONSULTATION**

7.1 Following consideration by Cabinet, this Report will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny for review, challenge and where deemed required, the scrutiny of specific areas in line with the Committee’s Terms of Reference.

## 8.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no financial implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

## **9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

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

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

10.1 The Corporate Plan progress updates included within this report align with the priorities as set out within the Council's Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 '[Making a Difference](#)'. With regard to the [Well-being of Future Generations Act \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), at the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020 Council meeting, it was agreed that the Corporate Plan priorities would also serve as its Well-being Objectives in line with the Act.

## **11.0 CONCLUSION**

11.1 This report sets out the financial and operational performance of the Council as at Quarter 3 2022/23, that is, 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022.

11.2 The Quarter 3 revenue budget position is projecting a £10.469M full year overspend, this being in line with the positions set out in the quarter 1 and 2 Performance Reports, and the main budget pressures due to increases in demand for services, particularly social care services; additional inflationary cost pressures; and less income received by some services due to reduced take-up during the early part of the year. The Council wide review process to identify options to bring the position closer in line with budget has been completed and has enabled one-off earmarked reserves to be re-allocated to fully fund the additional in-year costs. In addition to the above, the cost implications of the 2022/23 pay award for NJC staff and teachers is £10.5M above budgeted levels, with the in-year funding arrangement for this now in place.

11.3 Capital investment as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 is £78.399M, this being in line with the on-going strategy of significant capital investment in the Council's assets and infrastructure across the County Borough.

11.4 The third quarter progress updates for the Council's Corporate Plan priorities of People, Places and Prosperity demonstrate positive progress overall in supporting the delivery of improved outcomes for residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

11.5 The programme of work to enhance the Council's response to extreme weather events is progressing well, with key actions being delivered to support the Council's arrangements.

11.6 The work undertaken during quarter 3 across Council Services to support the delivery of the Climate Change Strategy – ‘Think Climate RCT’ is demonstrating clear progress toward the long-term targets for this area.

**Other Information:-**

**Relevant Scrutiny Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Contact Officer: Paul Griffiths**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

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

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

27<sup>th</sup> March 2023

**COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 (Quarter 3)**

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE & GROUP DIRECTOR –  
FINANCE, DIGITAL & FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE  
RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR LEYSHON)**

Item: 9

**Background Papers**

Officer to contact: Paul Griffiths

**COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT  
QUARTER 3 2022/23  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Contents**

**Section 1 – INTRODUCTION**

**Section 2 – REVENUE BUDGET**

**Revenue Budget Performance** – more detailed breakdowns are included in the following sections:

- 2a Education and Inclusion Services;
- 2b Community and Children’s Services;
- 2c Chief Executive;
- 2d Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services; and
- 2e Authority Wide Budgets.

**Earmark reserve update** – Section 2f provides a breakdown of expenditure against service areas.

**Section 3 – CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

**Capital programme budget** – more detailed breakdowns are included in the following sections:

- 3a Chief Executive;
- 3b Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services;
- 3c Education and Inclusion Services;
- 3d Community and Children’s Services; and
- 3e Capital Programme Funding.

**Prudential Indicators** – a detailed breakdown is included in Section 3f.

**Section 4 – ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH**

- Turnover; Sickness Absence; Organisation Health related investment areas; and Council Strategic Risks.

**Section 5 – CORPORATE PLAN**

Corporate Plan priority progress updates – Quarter 3 position statements are included within the following sections: 5a – People; 5b – Places; and 5c – Prosperity.

**Section 6 – ENHANCING THE COUNCIL’S RESPONSE TO EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS**

Progress update on the implementation of recommendations agreed by Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2020 to enhance the Council’s response to extreme weather events.

**Section 7 – THE COUNCIL’S RESPONSE TO TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE**

Progress update on the work being progressed across services to support the delivery of the Council’s Climate Change Strategy ‘Think Climate RCT’.

## **Section 1 – INTRODUCTION**

The Executive Summary brings together and summarises the Council's financial and operational performance position as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 (Quarter 3).

The Quarter 3 update continues to be set in the context of the Council's Services managing the on-going effects of communities recovering from the pandemic and the United Kingdom wide cost-of-living crisis, both of which are contributing to increases in demand for many services and significant inflationary cost pressures. Within this very challenging and changing environment, the Council is maintaining its focus on frontline service delivery, in line with Corporate Plan priorities, to help support the needs of residents and businesses.

Throughout the Executive Summary electronic links have been included that enable the reader to access more detailed information, as required.

## **Section 2 – REVENUE BUDGET**

### **Revenue Budget Performance**

	<b>2022/23 – as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 (Quarter 3)</b>		
<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Full Year Budget £M</b>	<b>Projected Expenditure as at Quarter 3 £M</b>	<b>Variance Over / (Under) £M</b>
<a href="#">Education &amp; Inclusion Services (2a)</a>	207.676	207.520	(0.156)
<a href="#">Community &amp; Children's Services (2b)</a>	181.078	188.695	7.617
<a href="#">Chief Executive (2c)</a>	35.078	34.850	(0.228)
<a href="#">Prosperity, Development &amp; Frontline Services (2d)</a>	64.007	67.261	3.254
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>487.839</b>	<b>498.326</b>	<b>10.487</b>
<a href="#">Authority Wide Budgets (2e)</a>	78.953	78.935	(0.018)
<b>Total</b>	<b>566.792</b>	<b>577.261</b>	<b>10.469</b>
Funded By Drawdown from Earmarked Reserves			(10.469)
<b>Projected Full Year Position</b>			<b>0.000</b>

With regard to the overspend position, appropriate cover has now been identified across our earmarked reserves and accordingly a breakeven position is reported for this financial year. This has included funding for:

- High demand and cost of social care (Adult Services and Children's Services);
- Inflationary cost pressures, for example, Home to School Transport; and



- Lower levels of service take-up resulting in reduced levels of income received, for example, Leisure Services and noting that for this service area income levels are showing an improved position compared to quarters 1 and 2.

In addition to the above position and as reported at quarter 2, both the NJC pay award and the Teachers Pay Award were agreed at levels above which the Council had budgeted. The funding arrangement for this (final cost at £10.5M) has now been put in place, including appropriate drawdown from reserves.

Following on, revenue budget variances, projected at Quarter 3, for each Service Group are set out below.

### **Revenue budget variances projected at Quarter 3**

#### **1. Education & Inclusion Services**

##### **EDUCATION & INCLUSION SERVICES**

- Additional Learning Needs (£0.132M underspend); and
- Education other than at School (£0.184M underspend).

##### **21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY SCHOOLS**

- Catering (£0.242M overspend).

#### **2. Community and Children's Services**

##### **ADULT SERVICES**

- Long Term Care & Support (£0.366M overspend);
- Commissioned Services (£5.601M overspend);
- Provider Services (£1.188M overspend);
- Short Term Intervention Services (£0.899M underspend), and
- Management, Safeguarding & Support Services (£0.230M overspend).

##### **CHILDREN SERVICES**

- Safeguarding & Support (including Children Looked After) (£1.647M overspend);
- Early Intervention (£0.083M underspend);
- Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (£0.085M underspend);
- Intensive Intervention (£0.789M underspend); and
- Management & Support Service (£0.081M underspend).

##### **TRANSFORMATION**

- Group & Transformation Management (£0.079M underspend); and
- Service Improvement (£0.085M underspend).

##### **PUBLIC HEALTH AND PROTECTION**

- Public Protection (£0.288M underspend);
- Community Services (£0.143M underspend);
- Communities & Wellbeing (£0.169M underspend); and
- Leisure, Countryside and Cultural Services (£1.324M overspend).

### 3. Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services

#### PROSPERITY & DEVELOPMENT

- Prosperity & Development (£0.120M underspend).

#### FRONTLINE SERVICES

- Highways Management (£0.059M overspend);
- Transportation (£3.491M overspend);
- Street Cleansing (£0.066M overspend);
- Waste Services (£0.205M underspend); and
- Parks Services (£0.061M underspend).

### 4. Chief Executive

#### CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- Democratic Services & Communications (£0.085M underspend);
- Legal Services (£0.082M underspend);
- Finance & Digital Services (£0.167M underspend); and
- Corporate Estates (£0.058M overspend).

### 5. Authority Wide Budgets

- Levies (£0.144M overspend); and
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme (£0.101M underspend).

### **Earmark Reserve Update**

- A breakdown of full year expenditure against approved earmark reserves for Service Areas can be viewed at [Section 2f](#).

## **Section 3 – CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

### **Capital Programme Budget**

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>2022/23 - as at 31st December 2022</b>	
	<b>Capital Budget £M</b>	<b>Actual Expenditure £M</b>
<a href="#">Chief Executive (3a)</a>	4.162	1.051
<a href="#">Prosperity, Development &amp; Frontline Services (3b)</a>	80.735	44.227
<a href="#">Education &amp; Inclusion Services (3c)</a>	64.985	30.676
<a href="#">Community &amp; Children's Services (3d)</a>	8.391	2.445
<b>Total</b>	<b>158.273</b>	<b>78.399</b>

### **Key Capital Variances at Quarter 3**

- Re-profiling of a number of projects to reflect changes in the total cost of schemes and revised delivery timescales.
- Grant approvals introduced into the Capital Programme: Welsh Government (WG) National Empty Homes Grant Scheme (£5.057M); WG Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Transformation Fund (£0.123M); WG Transforming Towns (£1.511M); WG Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (£0.117M); WG Childcare Grant (£0.425M); WG WEFO ERDF Modern Industrial Units Development (£0.707M); and UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund (£18.322M).

For information on how the Capital Programme is funded see [Section 3e](#).

### **Prudential Indicators**

For a detailed breakdown of Prudential Indicators, see [Section 3f](#).

## Section 4 – ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH

- Turnover

Service Area	2022/23		2021/22			
	As at 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2022		As at 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2021		As at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2022	
	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover
<b>Turnover – Council Wide</b>	<b>10,870</b>	<b>9.16</b>	<b>10,990</b>	<b>8.82</b>	<b>11,079</b>	<b>11.30</b>
Community & Children's Services <sup>1</sup>	2,747	12.34	2,983	8.62	2,976	12.70
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services	785	6.11	901	9.21	945	11.22
Education & Inclusion Services	1,275	4.47	1,232	6.98	1,233	9.08
<u>Schools</u>	<u>4,956</u>	<u>9.62</u>	<u>4,996</u>	<u>9.59</u>	<u>5,013</u>	<u>11.35</u>
Primary	3,112	7.90	3,211	7.79	3,238	9.51
Secondary	1,844	12.53	1,785	12.83	1,775	14.70
Chief Executive's Division	1,107	6.78	878	7.29	912	9.54

- Sickness Absence

Service Area	2022/23	2021/22	
	As at 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2022 %	As at 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2021 %	As at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2022 %
<b>% days lost to sickness absence – Council Wide</b>	<b>5.45</b>	<b>5.08</b>	<b>5.40</b>
Community & Children's Services <sup>1</sup>	7.96	7.27	7.46
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services	4.97	5.99	5.62
Education & Inclusion Services	4.84	4.48	4.88
<u>Schools</u>	<u>4.73</u>	<u>4.01</u>	<u>4.61</u>
Primary	5.18	4.15	4.77
Secondary	3.98	3.77	4.31
Chief Executive's Division	3.46	3.74	3.54

For a more detailed breakdown of 2022/23 staff turnover and sickness absence information [click here](#).

<sup>1</sup> 2022/23 position reflects service area restructures

## **Organisation Health related investment areas**

There will be a continued focus on investing in organisational health related areas, for example, IT infrastructure and invest to save energy efficiency schemes, with projects being delivered operationally within services across the Council.

- **Council Strategic Risks**

The Council's Strategic Risk Register is reviewed on an on-going basis to take account of the changing internal and external operating environment, including the on-going impact of Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis.

As part of the quarter 3 update process, it has not been deemed necessary to revise Strategic Risk Register risk ratings to those reported at quarter 2. This position will be kept under on-going review and, where revisions are considered necessary, these will be included in future Strategic Risk Register updates.

The Council's Strategic Risk Register, as at quarter 3, can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

## **Section 5 – CORPORATE PLAN**

Corporate Plan priority action plans are in place and cover the three priorities of People, Places and Prosperity. Each action plan includes a number of performance measures to accompany key actions, to provide Members with a full as picture as possible of the Council's performance. For Members information, the reintroduction of in-year reporting of performance measures from quarter 2, the first time since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, will be an on-going process and be subject to revision / refinement to ensure they help measure the difference the Council's work is having on residents and communities.

A summary of progress made across each of the three priorities as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 (Quarter 3) is set out in Sections 5a - c. Members will note that as part of the summaries of progress, electronic links have been included to each priority action plan, providing more detailed information on the progress during the third quarter of the year.

### **Corporate Plan Priority Progress Update**

- **PEOPLE** (Section 5a)

#### **PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful**

##### **Summary of progress to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022**

#### **Supporting our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life.**

We have continued our work to support our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life. Construction of the new extra care facility in Porth has been delayed due to the main contractor entering administration. We are working with Linc Cymru to plan for the continuation of the project following retender of a new contractor. Our plans for a further three extra care facilities in Mountain Ash, Treorchy and Ferndale are being developed in line with the overall review of the Council's residential care homes for older people in Rhondda Cynon Taf (further detail provided below). The development of Extra Care housing offers an opportunity for older people to lead a more independent life and prevent unnecessary admissions to residential care. Extra Care also enables people to have more control and be more involved in decisions about their environment and the services they receive. All of the new Extra Care homes have also been designed to achieve '[BREEAM](#)' excellence, the world's leading sustainability assessment.

Working with [Trivallis](#), we opened a [supported accommodation scheme](#) in Llanhari following a refurbishment of Elm Road accommodation. This scheme provides a safe, secure and high-quality environment for adults with learning disabilities and autism. Assessments have been completed and individuals have started to move into their accommodation. A similar supported living scheme in Treorchy is also under construction in partnership with [Cynon Taf Housing Association](#) and is progressing as planned and is due to be completed in Spring 2023. A care provider has been appointed to provide support at the scheme when it is opened. A further scheme is also planned at the '[Big Shed](#)' development in Tonypany. Proposals for the [former Bronllwyn Care Home in Gelli](#) were approved by [Cabinet](#) in July 2022. The development will provide new specialist care accommodation for people with learning disabilities as part of the wider modernisation of Council residential care provision. The development is progressing as planned, with Planning Application submitted and tender advertised in December 2022.

We are taking forward the Council's review on the future shape of residential care for older people to ensure we create the right model of service delivery to respond to increasing demand and

## **PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful**

changing needs in the long term. A draft report was considered for [pre-scrutiny by Overview & Scrutiny Committee in November 2022](#). Following this, a [report was provided to Cabinet in December 2022](#) which set out preferred options on the future provision of accommodation with care for older people in each of the Council's nine residential care homes. The proposals to modernise local residential care services include a major investment to build four state-of-the-art new care accommodation while retaining five Council care homes. This preferred option focuses on preventative services, well-being and future needs. This option would increase choice for people requiring accommodation with care and offers viable alternatives for those able to remain independent within their communities. The [consultation](#) on the preferred option will be open until 27<sup>th</sup> January 2023 and provides an opportunity for residents that may be affected by the proposals, their families, carers and advocates, staff members and the public to find out more and have their say. [Drop in sessions](#) within the community will also be held in January to allow residents to discuss the proposals with officers. Once complete, the consultation and involvement results will enable the Cabinet to make informed decisions on the preferred options for each home in the New Year.

We continue to invest in reablement services to prevent escalation of need increasing or enable recovery and independence. Commission Care & Repair have increased service capacity in order to reduce waiting times for minor adaptations and small and medium Disabled Facility Grants. We have created additional residential care "step up step down" beds in the Council's In-house Residential Care Homes to avoid hospital admission and support discharged. As of 31st December 2022, 15 people were supported in an interim placement.

We continue to maximise technology to enhance independence and assist with care. We are working with partners to pilot a '[Just checking](#)' and '[Just roaming](#)' project from January 2023 across our Supported Living Service to explore the opportunities available to promote more independence for individuals and improve cost effectiveness. These technologies allow adults with learning disabilities and autism to live independently and safely within their supported living homes. Work on the Adult Services Digital Strategy and work plan have been delayed due to operational priorities so this work will now be taken forward in 2023/24.

We are also empowering people to be more independent at home by continuing to promote direct payments as a way of managing individual care needs. We have reviewed our existing direct payment policy and new guidance has been developed and shared with staff, service users and our commissioned direct payment support provider. The new policy and guidance have been completed and the information will be introduced in January 2023. We commissioned [Community Catalyst](#) to support people and local partners to develop small enterprises and ventures that can provide real choice and increase the number and range of homecare and support options for local people. We will launch this project to the public in January 2023.

We are also building on our engagement in 2021/22 and learning from the pandemic to inform the on-going transformation of day services so that people with a learning disability have access to meaningful activity and opportunities in their own communities, including employment to achieve their personal goals and live ordinary lives. The draft Day Services Strategy is currently being developed and employment and volunteering are a specific element; a range of co-production events are being held to inform the draft strategy and will be reported to Cabinet in March 2023.

### **Encouraging residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental wellbeing.**

We continue to encourage all residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental wellbeing as we know that this is key to living a long and healthy life, and reducing the risk

## PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

of long-term illnesses such as heart disease, stroke and Type 2 diabetes. We continue to invest in our playgrounds and work is progressing on our programme of investment for 2022/23, with 11 projects completed so far. We have also improved the fitness suite in [Hawthorn Leisure Centre](#), which is now open to the public. A new 3G pitch in Baglan Field/Ynysfio Field, Treherbert is also available for use by the public and sports clubs. This means that Rhondda Cynon Taf now has 14 3G facilities spread across the County Borough, and crucially means that the ambition to ensure that residents have access to such a facility within a 3-mile radius of wherever they live has been achieved. We also trialled [cold water swimming sessions](#) in Lido Ponty to provide further opportunities for activity. Winter sessions can appeal to a different kind of swimmer at Lido Ponty, especially those who are already – or are considering – dipping their toes into the increasingly-popular cold water swimming movement which has been linked to mental health benefits. Triathletes and those who compete in Iron Man competitions will also benefit from the chance to train in wetsuits. The trial was very successful and further sessions will be held in Quarter 4.

We also [launched our new-look Leisure for Life APP](#) in December 2022, which can be downloaded free of charge and enhances the customer experience, providing opportunities to book classes, check availability of classes, make payments for pay-as-you-go sessions, provide feedback on individual classes and make suggestions to improve the services on offer.

As part of our work with partners to give residents access to health and wellbeing information and activities, in partnership with Moondance Cancer Initiative charity, we have successfully delivered [a learning programme](#) in Pontypridd High School that aimed to improve pupils' understanding of cancer and in particular bowel cancer to raise awareness of this type of cancer, the causes, symptoms and the importance of early detection through screening. By improving pupils' understanding, understanding in the wider community e.g. parents, carers, grandparents would also be improved. This learning programme is an investment to influence long-term behaviour change within younger generations by educating them about cancer, cancer treatment, and the connection to healthy behaviours. It aligns with the new curriculum in Wales, and contributes to the national aim to develop healthy, confident, informed citizens. It also explores intergenerational learning, by raising awareness of bowel screening, signs and symptoms amongst the wider school community alongside teaching the dedicated cancer module.

The pandemic highlighted how important and valued our libraries are to our communities. We are enhancing the services available at our new libraries in [Llys Cadwyn](#) and the [Treorchy Cultural Hub](#) with a focus on community engagement and partnership. We have also involved communities in seventeen 'Community Conversations' sessions, engaging 299 individuals across Rhondda Cynon Taf as part of the implementation of the National Lottery Heritage Fund ['Altered Images' project](#). Feedback from the sessions will inform the Year 2 Action Plan. We had planned to produce more online content for residents, but suitable training has not been found for staff, so this work is not continuing at this time.

We continue to prioritise strengthening relationships with residents and community groups and finding out what is important to residents. This includes working to ensure that communities have access to information, advice and guidance both digitally and locally. Following the severe disruption of the pandemic, our Community Co-ordinators have now returned to working in community bases and our One4all services are also fully open including the re-introduction of a drop-in service at [Pontyclun Library](#). We want to ensure older people feel safe and welcome in their communities by working in partnership with the Older People's Advisory Group to develop a plan to achieve Age Friendly Wales status. Progress is being made with local developments noted within the Gilfach Goch Community Venue.



## **PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful**

We want to increase the opportunities for people to learn and use Welsh within their communities and we are working with Menter Iaith to deliver Welsh courses and classes across Rhondda Cynon Taf and enhancing the provision at [Garth Olwg Centre](#) as part of this.

### **Integrating health and social care and providing support for those with mental health problems and complex needs.**

We continue to collaborate with our partners to support older people to stay in their homes longer, prevent unnecessary stays in hospital and to help get people home from hospital more quickly when they are well enough. We are working with Health to explore options for the development of an Integrated Community Services Model which was agreed by the [Regional Partnership Board](#) in October 2022, pending completion of an implementation plan. Once agreed, the model will be presented to Cabinet for approval. We are also working together to improve patient experience and redesign unscheduled care pathways to embed 'home first' discharge principles from Hospitals. This includes working with Health to implement the Welsh Government's [Discharge to Recover then Assess Model](#) (D2RA) pathways as part of the [6 goals for urgent and emergency care programme initiative](#). Following delay, a phased D2RA implementation commenced in January 2023.

Our work to review and redesign Community Mental Health Services with Health is ongoing. As part of this we will complete a review of current Community Mental Health Services and develop options to redesign our joint Service offer to meet current and future long term need and demand pressures. Redesign work has continued but completion has been delayed and will now be linked to the agreement of the Integrated Community Services model referred to above.

### **Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do.**

We continue to improve access to timely information, advice and assistance to facilitate improved access to, and engagement in, early intervention and prevention services for children, young people and families. The new Rhondda Cynon Taf Families website is complete and the website [www.rctfamilies.co.uk](http://www.rctfamilies.co.uk) has been live since October 2022. It has been promoted to staff within the Council and our relevant partners, including schools, childcare providers and community partners. It has received 500+ views so far with the Tips for Parents and Programmes and Courses being the most popular. We are currently reviewing the capacity and ability to develop multi-use areas and evaluate building capacity within our Children and Family centres to support the development of an access plan for community groups, during day time, evenings and weekends going forward. As part of the [development of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Families website](#) and social media opportunities, the promotion and profile of Centres is being raised, showing the resources available and signposting to sources of advice and support in community settings.

We continue to focus our services on early intervention and prevention to improve the life outcomes for children in Rhondda Cynon Taf. We have appointed an additional Mental Health & Wellbeing Officer to increase capacity in YEPS to meet the increased demand. We are also revising existing Children and Communities Grant contracts with providers to understand areas that could be improved to encourage more to join the Approved Providers List. This supports the delivery of integrated support pathways supporting the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children, young people and families. We are embedding a suite of 16+ Support projects that are being offered to young people leaving education with a destination including the Becoming Independent Project and Reducing Risk of Youth Homelessness Project. In Quarter 3, the 16+ team have also been delivering sessions in youth clubs re: safety, delivering sessions in colleges

## PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

re: bullying, drug awareness, trafficking and exploitation and offering support at drop in sessions at job centres.

We want to make sure that those children that cannot remain with their families can be looked after closer to home. We are continuing to work with providers to develop placement sufficiency close to home. A [Residential Children's Services Strategy](#) and action plan for the next 5 years has been drafted. The draft strategy was subject to pre-scrutiny in [November 2022](#) and will be presented to Cabinet for consideration in February 2023. We are working with [Foster Wales](#) to increase the recruitment of foster carers, in particular, those who are able to support children with more complex needs. Enquiries are increasing and 13 new foster carers have been approved to date against a target of 19. We are also developing a revised Housing Options model for care-leavers to whom the Council owes a corporate parenting duty in order that they can leave care placements in a safe, planned way which avoids homelessness wherever possible. Two dedicated Housing Solutions Officers have been appointed and a referral pathway document has been drafted.

We continue to strengthen participation of children and young people to promote engagement and involvement specifically with Children Looked After and partner agencies to ensure co-production and that the voice of children and young people are heard in service development and delivery. We have developed a Participation Strategy which incorporates different communication approaches when engaging with children and young people.

We are delivering the Early Years Transformation agenda in Rhondda Cynon Taf in order to ensure early years services are universally available and specialist services are targeted by need and not geographical location. This will also improve early intervention and prevention outcomes across the County Borough. Health characteristics data transfer has been completed. An Early Years Vulnerability Project plan is in place and a full profile test underway; however, full information sharing protocols are yet to be agreed. This work is being led by Public Health Wales. We continue to pilot the new integrated Early Years delivery model and are currently leading on the external evaluation of the new delivery model in Rhondda Cynon Taf on behalf of the region. The data continues to be reviewed and reported on a regular basis to Senior Managers in the Council and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board. Works continues to capture more data on self-referrals to establish if these are triggered by Health Visitor discussion.

The full action plan can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

## Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 3

<b>Progress in our Investment Priorities – PEOPLE</b>		
<b>Investment Area</b>	<b>Investment Value<sup>2</sup> £M</b>	<b>Quarter 3 Update</b>
Extracare Housing	6.974	<p>This investment funding covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Porth - agreed by the Council's Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020. Progress to date includes: the vacation of the building; site surveys and demolition works completed; and planning permission granted 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021. Due to the main contractor entering administration, work is progressing to plan for the continuation of the project following a re-tender process being completed.</li> </ul> <p>(For information, previous projects delivered in this area include: the former Maesyffynnon Home for the Elderly site (Aberaman) and Pontypridd "Cwrt yr Orsaf" Extra Care Housing Scheme, opened in May 2020 and October 2021 respectively).</p> <p>Plans for a further three extra care facilities in Mountain Ash, Treorchy and Ferndale are being developed in line with the overall review of the Council's residential care homes for older people.</p>
Tackling Poverty Fund	0.300	<p>This investment funding is to help address areas where there are high levels of poverty (including fuel poverty) to increase the disposable income of households, for example, by supporting households to reduce energy bills, helping to overcome barriers to find employment. In parallel, funding has been secured via the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund to deliver a local scheme for Heating Grants and Solar Panels, to further support this priority area.</p>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.274</b>	

<sup>2</sup> Investment Value – relates to LIVE projects / works only that have been allocated additional investment funding.

o **PLACES** (Section 5b)

**PLACES - Where people are proud to live, work and play**

**Summary of progress to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022**

**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**

We continue to promote good recycling practices through campaigns and education. The [Education Centre at Bryn Pica](#) has reopened offering schools to take part in face to face visits which will run alongside our online sessions. During 'Recycling Week' (17-23 Oct) we attended local supermarkets and asked residents to '[KEEP IT REAL for RCT!](#)', and reminded residents to rinse out items before recycling, and where they can recycle items not eligible for kerbside collection. Our campaigns have also focussed [on key recycling activity](#) over the festive period promoting [Christmas tree collections](#), a Christmas [card recycling challenge](#) and [a short story competition](#) for primary schools.

A report was submitted the Council's Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in October regarding [Recycling Performance](#) with detail on all recycling data over the last 4 years. The tonnage of recycled waste to date is lower than the same period last year (56,612 tonnes compared to 66,754 tonnes in 2021/22) and our overall recycling percentage is also lower i.e. 65.11% compared to 68.63% at Quarter 3 2021/22. This quarter a [Revised Waste Management Strategy](#) was presented to Council's Cabinet in November which proposed future changes to waste collection that would have a positive effect on recycling tonnages. Residents have been invited to '[have a say](#)' on these changes via the Councils '[Let's Talk](#)' engagement platform. The consultation will end early January 2023.

Our work with landlords, agents and residents to encourage good recycling practices that will reduce municipal waste continues and we have launched '[A day in the life....](#)' to provide an insight into daily recycling routines for the Council.

The Council's Enforcement Team has continued to monitor and act against fly-tippers with 2,391 recorded incidents to date this year (2,514 last year) and enforced off street parking restrictions and school keep clear zones to ensure the safe passage of both drivers and residents. We also continue to take appropriate action to enforce the Public Spaces Protection Order for dog controls including taking [relevant court action](#) for this and against those illegally [fly-tipping](#). Enforcement is also being supported by a new team of [Community Wardens](#)

We are progressing our climate change agenda and continue to explore areas where we can create renewable energy e.g. [The Coed Ely Solar Farm](#) and Hydro Electric Generation at [Dare Valley Country Park](#) and [Treforest Weir](#). Our funding bid for the Eco Park and Plastics Reprocessing Plant at Bryn Pica was not approved by Welsh Government but it is hoped that a scaled down operation will be more acceptable and we are working on this. There continues to be an on-going focus on implementing procurement policies to reduce the use of single use plastic items. In addition, the new reuse shop in Aberdare hosted a successful '[BIG RCT Toy swap](#)' in December.

**Keeping the County Borough moving, including improvements to roads and pavements and public transport, whilst also improving air quality**

Our highways investment programme activity continues across the County Borough, and we have continued to [keep our roads accessible and safe](#) through the winter months. We have seen

## **PLACES - Where people are proud to live, work and play**

some slippage this quarter at the [Imperial Bridge, Porth Bodringallt Bridge Infilling](#) and [Llanharan Railway Footbridge Replacement](#). All of these major schemes have revised delivery dates and will continue into 2023/24. We have progressed plans for improvement work at [Glenboi Pumping Station](#), Mountain Ash; undertaken stakeholder consultation on the Pentre Flood Alleviation Scheme and the first phase construction of the [Treorchy](#) and [Upper Bronallt Terrace, Abercwmboi](#) Flood Alleviation Schemes are nearing completion.

We also continue to progress the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act and flood risk mitigation measures. An update on the recommendations contained in the review of the Council's response to Storm Dennis [Cabinet Report 18 December 2020](#) can be found in Section 6 of this Executive Summary. This quarter, two further Section 19 Flood Reports have been released for [Mountain Ash](#) and [Bleanllechau/Ferndale](#). This [completes the 19 Reports](#) expected this year. We have also undertaken flood alleviation works in [Pentre](#), and commenced public consultation on [Land Drainage Byelaws in RCT](#) and on the [updating of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy](#) as agreed by Cabinet in [November](#). We have also awarded the contract for the [next phase of the Tylostown Landslip Work](#).

Active travel initiatives are being progressed and this quarter we have invited residents to '[Have your say on future Safer Routes scheme in Llantwit Fardre](#)' and have also completed [pedestrian crossing upgrades](#) in the area. Work on Maes Y Bryn Safe Routes in Communities continues to provide a safer pedestrian environment, encouraging more parents and pupils to walk to and from school, and reduce vehicle emissions in the area.

The [RCT Electric Vehicle Charging Implementation Plan](#) was [discussed](#) at a meeting of the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee in [October](#) and an [update report](#) was presented to the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in November. We have also submitted our Air Quality Action Plan to Welsh Government and await their approval on the action presented.

### **Ensuring the County Borough is one of the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion and where residents feel safe**

Our community cohesion work is being progressed and are providing opportunities to engage through our Community Hubs. Additional funding received will provide opportunities to develop this further. '[Winter Welcome Centres](#)' have been established this quarter to provide warmth and shelter to residents funded by Welsh Government's 'Winter Hubs' support scheme. 92 Centres have been established in RCT and, to mid-January, 3,100 residents are [reported to have used these facilities](#).

Supporting work to develop 'An age friendly Rhondda Cynon Taf', a '[Vintage Recipe Book](#)' was launched in December containing traditional family recipes that had been compiled in partnership with the Local Food Partnership, the Llantrisant and District 50+ Older People's Forum and students at Tonyrefail Community School. Funding was received from [Sustainable Food Places Wales](#), and the idea for the book came out of the wider '[Food for the Planet](#)' campaign, which supports the Council's commitment to tackle Climate Change and highlights that our food system contributes about 30 per cent to global greenhouse gas emissions - more than transport or energy. Additionally, a third of the food we produce goes to waste. We also continue to progress work to achieve bronze award status in [Sustainable Food Places](#).

Our work to prevent anti-social behaviour in town centres continues in partnership with the Probation Service and Pobl. In December the Council secured its first [anti-social behaviour civil injunction](#) against a young person causing alarm and distress to their local community. This

## **PLACES - Where people are proud to live, work and play**

demonstrates a clear message of zero tolerance to anti-social behaviour. It is expected that the presence of our newly appointed Community Wardens in our town centres will help prevent the escalation of anti-social behaviour in our town centres.

The [Barod](#) Integrated Substance Misuse Service (now including Bridgend) continues to run various courses to educate on the harms associated with substance misuse. Whilst there has been limited outreach work due to staff shortages during the quarter, it is hoped that this will once again increase in the last quarter.

Our new joint Oasis Centre and Domestic Abuse Service is expected to be operational from the Oasis Centre in the next financial year. The Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme (DVPP) is now operational from the Oasis Centre and an evaluation will be undertaken at the end of 2022/23.

To keep our communities safe, we continue to publish cases where rogue traders have been prosecuted on the Council's website including a case relating to the sale of [illegal tobacco products](#) and a [Store Closure Order](#) for the sale of counterfeit tobacco products and disposable vapes to children. A [paper](#) was submitted to Community Services Scrutiny Committee in October updating on the role of Trading Standards in protecting vulnerable consumers.

In November, we also co-ordinated a series of community and school activities as part of [Road Safety Week](#) (14-20<sup>th</sup> November) in partnership with the road safety charity [Brake](#). The theme this year was 'Road Safety for All', and activities included '[Kerbcraft](#)' [child pedestrian training](#), a '[Megadrive](#)' event: a Road Safety Talk; [National Standards Cycle Training](#); '[Pass Plus Cymru](#)' sessions; and an 'Exchanging Places' intervention session regarding the risks of being close to heavy goods vehicles.

We continue to support the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Schemes (United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme and the Widening Dispersal Scheme, and we are working with social landlords and tenants to prevent instances of homelessness through the provision of a new Virtual Tenancy Ready Classroom that provides information on what to expect when searching for and moving into a new home, tenant rights and responsibilities, and where to go for help and support. A [Cabinet Report](#) was presented in December updating on the current support being provided to refugees.

### **Getting the best out of our parks by looking after and investing in our greenspaces**

We continue to invest in our green spaces and increase biodiversity. Our [Playground Investment Programme is also progressing](#) to deliver planned improvements during 2022/23, as set out in the People priority update, and we continue to improve our digital platforms to provide a more accessible service to residents.

In June this year, the Council's [2022-2025 'Think Climate RCT' – Making Rhondda Cynon Taf Carbon Neutral by 2030](#), Climate Change Strategy was agreed by [Cabinet](#) with the strategy providing a framework to support carbon reduction across both the Council and the County Borough. An associated Decarbonisation Plan to reduce specific carbon reduction elements that inform the Council's Carbon Footprint and meet Welsh Government reporting requirements is expected to be published by year end.

In support of biodiversity, work to establish natural carbon storage solutions continues with commissioned Peat Bog investigations commencing in Cwmparc. Reports were submitted to the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee in October regarding progress in '[Peatland](#)'

## **PLACES - Where people are proud to live, work and play**

management, and the [Action for Nature: The Local Nature Plan for RCT](#). In addition a report on '[Biodiversity and the Local Nature Partnership in RCT](#)' was also presented to the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group in November. In December, the 'Section 6 Biodiversity Duty – 3 Year Report to Welsh Government 2020-2022' was presented and [approved](#) for reporting to Welsh Government by the [Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee](#).

Work continues at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park with the commencement of the relaying of [footpaths](#) and the progressing of [Bandstand improvements](#).

We continue to progress activity in support of the 2024 National Eisteddfod for Wales. This quarter has seen the [announcement of the RCT 2024 Officials](#). We continue to work collaboratively with the Eisteddfod team to discuss ideas of how to promote the National Eisteddfod within Rhondda Cynon Taf, and an accommodation communications group has been established to aid the flow of information.

During this quarter many events and activities have been held in RCT including: The [Halloween Spooktacular](#), [A Festival of Remembrance](#) and the [Pontypridd Remembrance Sunday Parade](#), [Santa's Toy Mine](#), [Christmas Events in our Town Centres](#) and the [RCT Santa Appeal](#), which was once again [very successful](#) and well supported by both staff and residents; our [Annual Pantomime](#) and the opportunity for [Boxing and New Year's Day swim](#) or [a cold water swim at the Lido](#) and to take part in the annual [Nos Galan Races](#).

The full action plan can be viewed by [clicking here](#)

## Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 3

<b>Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES</b>		
<b>Investment Area</b>	<b>Investment Value<sup>3</sup> £M</b>	<b>Quarter 3 Update</b>
Highways Infrastructure Repairs	6.826	The additional resources are being used in conjunction with existing resources to deliver a programme of highways infrastructure repairs between 2022/23 and 2024/25.
Unadopted Roads	0.600	To support a programme of work to private streets that the Council has identified as requiring specific improvements. Following completion of the necessary works, the streets will be adopted as highways maintainable at public expense. Of the 21 streets which are included in the programme, 9 were completed as at the end of quarter 3 and the remaining 12 schemes are scheduled to be completed during the year.
Play Areas	0.814	There are 19 schemes which form the planned programme of works for 2022/23. As at 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2022, 11 had been completed; 2 were under construction; 3 have been designed, costed and scheduled; and 3 are to be designed.
Skate Parks/Multi Use Games Areas	0.391	There are 4 schemes which form the planned programme. As at 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2022, 2 had been designed, costed and scheduled and 2 are planned to be delivered in 2023/24.
Structures: Brook Street Footbridge	2.351	This funding is supporting the replacement of the footbridge. Construction works have progressed with the main structure works scheduled to be completed in quarter 4.
Structures	3.516	The investment funding has been allocated to support structure projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nant Cwm Parc Cantilever and Institute Bridge Strengthening and Maerdy Mountain walls – works complete.</li> <li>• High Street Wall, Llantrisant – main works completed and no further long-term traffic management required to High Street). Minor follow up scheme required in quarter 4.</li> <li>• Other major retaining wall refurbishments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Retaining walls at Salem Terrace (Llwynypia) and Dinas Road (Dinas) – timescale to undertake tender process rescheduled from quarter 3 to quarter 4.</li> <li>○ Retaining wall at Brewery Terrace (Pontygwaith) - to be rescheduled for 2023/24 to enable prioritisation of other works in the area.</li> <li>○ Harcourt Terrace Wall, Penrhiwceiber - works being completed by Transport for Wales as part of a jointly funded project with the Council.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Investment Value – relates to LIVE projects / works only that have been allocated additional investment funding.



Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value <sup>3</sup> £M	Quarter 3 Update
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Llanharan Railway Footbridge – further to the re-commencement of works on site following licence / Natural Resources Wales approvals, piling is nearing completion.</li> <li>○ Imperial Bridge – works scheduled for 2022/23 have been completed and the second phase of the scheme will be scheduled for 2023.</li> <li>○ Bodringallt Bridge Infilling – drainage design underway.</li> <li>○ Rhigos Rock Anchors – tender process on-going, with tenders due to be returned in quarter 4.</li> <li>○ Various inspections and surveys continue to be undertaken as advance preparation for future schemes.</li> </ul>
Parks Structures	0.730	<p>The investment funding has been allocated to support various footbridge repairs and replacements within Parks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pentre Footbridge - works complete.</li> <li>● Gelli Isaf – Scheduled Monument Conservation Scheme – phase 1 repairs have been completed with planning work underway to consider funding options for a phase 2.</li> <li>● Rhondda Heritage Park Wall - tender process progressing.</li> <li>● Various inspections and surveys continue to be undertaken as advance preparation for future schemes.</li> </ul>
Parks and Green Spaces	2.755	<p>This investment funding is supporting drainage, pavilion and infrastructure improvements to various parks sites. The 2022/23 programme comprises of 72 schemes and, as at quarter 3, 33 schemes have been completed. The remaining schemes will be progressed during 2022/23 as part of an on-going programme of work.</p>
Llanharan Link Road	5.558	<p>This investment funding is supporting various stages of development, preliminary design, ground investigations and ecology surveys. Following the Pre-Planning Application Consultation (PAC) which took place in 2021, work to enable a planning application is progressing (noting that the timing of submission of a planning application is subject to the outcome of Welsh Government's Road Review, that is scheduled to be announced in quarter 4).</p>
A4119 Dualling (Stinkpot Hill)	7.035	<p>This investment funding is supporting the dualling of the highway between the South Wales Fire Service Headquarters roundabout and Coed Ely roundabout. Further to the commencement of works in August 2022, temporary traffic management arrangements are in place to enable site clearance and substantial earthworks on the eastern side of the road. Works remain on programme to complete in 2024.</p>

<b>Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES</b>		
<b>Investment Area</b>	<b>Investment Value<sup>3</sup> £M</b>	<b>Quarter 3 Update</b>
Community Hubs	0.190	Works are being planned for the foyer area of the Park & Dare which forms part of The Hub and external funding opportunities are also being explored.
Gelli/Treorchy Link Road	0.393	This investment funding relates to investigatory works for a solution which will help alleviate congestion at Stag Square. Feasibility and a WelTAG stage 1 has been completed and is in the process of review to inform WelTAG stage 2.
Cynon Gateway (North), Aberdare Link Road	1.551	This investment funding relates to the preliminary design, planning application and tender preparation for a link road from A4059 Aberdare to join the A465 Heads Of the Valleys road. Following receipt of planning permission, work is ongoing to procure a designer for the detailed design stage of the project and risk mitigation. This scheme is also subject to the Welsh Government's Roads Review.
Bryn Pica Eco Park	1.286	This investment funding is to support enabling works, planning and ecology for the development of an Eco Park at the Bryn Pica Waste Management Facility. Discussions are on-going with Welsh Government in respect of funding opportunities.
Streetcare (New scheme)	0.020	This investment funding is to be used across the County Borough to replace worn/damaged bins (mainly dog bins). The bins were ordered in quarter 3 and will be installed in line with identified need.
Porth Interchange Metro + LTF	--	As set out in the Porth Regeneration Strategy, a new Transport Hub in the Town Centre is currently under construction, funded by UK Government's Levelling Up Fund, WG Local Transport Fund and Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (total project costs £5.4M). During quarter 3, works continued mainly on the external areas of the Transport Hub and is scheduled to be completed in the first half of 2023/24.
Leisure – Darran Park 3G Pitch	0.175	This investment funding is to develop the Astro Turf Pitch in Darran Park (Ferndale) into a 3G pitch.
<b>Total</b>	<b>34.191</b>	

- PROSPERITY (Section 5c)

**PROSPERITY - Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper**

**Summary of progress to 31st December 2022**

**Investing in our town centres, bringing jobs and homes into our town centres to create vibrant, thriving places people wish to live, work and socialise**

A range of support is available through the Council to support business growth and expansion in town centres, including the [Enterprise Investment Fund](#) and [Town Centre Maintenance Grant](#). Given the current economic challenges these will be reviewed to ensure that the most appropriate mix of support is available to help businesses to navigate these challenges and take advantage of emerging opportunities such as digital trading opportunities. Services continue to work closely with business representatives such as Business Improvement Districts to inform this work, and the development of a Business Engagement Strategy. Work is also continuing to improve the accessibility of Council tenders to local Small and Medium Sized Enterprises through improved communication and consideration of lotting structures.

An approved offer of Transforming Towns grant support up to March 2025 has been received from Welsh Government which will support town centre property improvements and form the basis of our improvement programme for the next 3 years and a pipeline of prospective projects has now begun to be delivered.

Existing town centre projects continue to be progressed, including the Porth Transport Hub, where construction is progressing well and on track for completion in Summer 2023. At Pontypridd Southern Gateway, the redevelopment of the former M&S and Burtons properties is currently undergoing detailed site investigation and design works and a contract for the demolition and clearance of the site is currently subject to a procurement process. Also in Pontypridd, construction of the YMCA is close to [completion](#), detailed design work continues on the Muni redevelopment and further detailed scoping and design work is commencing for a mixed use development of the former Bingo Hall site. A package of town centre improvement projects for Aberdare is currently being developed to form part of the draft regeneration strategy for engagement and consultation. In addition, approval has been received from Welsh Government and Transport for Wales to take forward active travel projects in Aberdare town centre, and feasibility options are currently being assessed. A range of key projects are currently being developed as part of the Tonypanydy town centre strategy, including Rhondda Housing Association Wales delivering [13 affordable apartments in Tonypanydy town centre](#) to regenerate a town centre site where the previous building was damaged by fire, following the Council providing funding through Welsh Government's Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme for demolition work at the site. Key Target projects in the Mountain Ash Town Centre Framework are being successfully delivered and are now close to completion.

**Delivering major regeneration and transportation schemes, maximising the impact of the South Wales Metro, to create better places to live and work, whilst protecting and enhancing the County Borough**

Preparation continues for the revised Local Development Plan, which will contain strategic level policies on land use and protection including carbon reduction and climate change. A second [call for candidate sites](#) was undertaken in Summer 2022 to identify locations suitable for potential development and further engagement with key stakeholders and analysis of detailed evidence continues to take place.

## **PROSPERITY - Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper**

Working with Cardiff Capital Region, we continue to progress [Housing viability gap funding](#) to remediate contaminated land conditions across 3 brownfield sites at the former Cwm Coking works, former Aberdare hospital site and Heol y Wenallt. A planning application for 299 dwellings has been submitted for the Aberdare site and will be considered by the Planning and Development committee in February. Pre-application advice has been provided for the scheme at Heol y Wenallt and a planning application is due to be submitted. Discussions for a funding package to remediate the former Cwm Coking works site are ongoing between the housing developer and Cardiff Capital Region City Deal.

Work is ongoing to deliver the [A4119 Coed Ely dualling scheme](#) which will also provide a separate community route. A planning application for the Llanharan link road is due to be submitted in quarter 4. Tender documents have also been prepared for the Cynon Gateway North scheme, but further work is on hold pending an announcement of the findings of the Welsh Government Roads Review. Work continues with broadband suppliers and Welsh Government to improve connectivity within the County Borough, although there are some delays to planned timescales due to Welsh Government tenders.

Work continues to develop the visitor economy. The Tourism delivery action plan has been signed off, providing clear direction for the five key themes in the RCT Tourism Strategy, and planned work has commenced. Improvement works continue at Ynysangharad Park, as noted in the Places priority plan, including new community and training facilities and restoration of the bandstand and sunken garden. Work is ongoing to progress opportunities for cross promotion at our Valleys Regional Park Discovery Gateway sites.

### **Ensuring we have good schools so all children have access to a great Education**

Work continues in partnership with Central South Consortium (CSC) to regularly review the progress of all schools. The introduction of all school review meetings is helpfully contributing to this work and the information provided is being used to inform further action. A Team Around the School protocol is in place for schools requiring co-ordinated local authority / CSC support. Strategies being developed for the Curriculum for Wales are due to be operational from the next academic year, and CSC has ensured that its work programme will enable updates on progress for this area to be captured appropriately. A teaching and learning conference will take place in March to share good practice. The impact of Covid-19 on learner progress continues to be a key area for Improvement Partners to review and capture, and local data is being collated by CSC. However, there is currently no agreed national approach to how schools are mapping learner progress. A report has been produced on the [impact of Family Engagement Officers](#) and an evaluation of Step 4 provision was produced in January, and proposals for tranche 3 have been agreed. A good practice conference for Step 4 also took place in the summer term.

The Writing Project, a commissioned literacy project aimed at improving standards of writing in primary and secondary schools, has been rolled out and a CSC report produced outlining the impact of the project to date.

Attendance and Wellbeing services are continuing to focus on data led interventions for all pupils with a focus on the most disadvantaged. Support and challenge meetings have been reintroduced for schools where exclusion levels are a potential level of concern, and preliminary meetings held with four schools. The new Wellbeing Strategic Plan for Education has been revised following consultation, including a child friendly version, and is awaiting formal sign off.

## **PROSPERITY - Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper**

Work continues to ensure effective anti-bullying strategies in our schools. Presentations have been delivered to primary and secondary Headteacher meetings to raise awareness of peer-on-peer sexual harassment and guidance has been provided to all schools. Training provided through the Whole School Approaches grant has covered peer on peer sexual harassment and group evaluation is being undertaken. Improvements have been made to data collection systems to ensure all incidents of bullying are appropriately recorded; however, due to concerns raised over low rates of reporting by incidents, a bullying survey has been undertaken in secondary schools to gather data directly from pupils. The results are being reviewed and circulated to schools and will be discussed at the next Headteachers partnership meeting.

Support continues for schools to implement new ALN legislation, including a professional learning programme, and review of schools self- evaluation which identified areas for development. Specific professional learning will be provided to Headteachers/ALNCos regarding self evaluation of ALN during the summer term, in collaboration with Principle Improvement Partners. A revised cluster based model is in place with funded release time for cluster leads to attend professional development and work with ALNCos. The Early years ALN coordinator forum continues to meet and share good practice. Work has been undertaken between the Council, schools and early years settings to enhance transition from early years settings into schools for children with additional learning needs, and the Transition protocol has been reviewed and revised. A pilot is also underway to evaluate an enhanced post-16 transition protocol for learners with additional learning needs. Collaborative work is underway with other Local Authorities to progress a South Central Regional working group to develop a regional approach to 'reasonable need' for specialist post-16 placements.

The Early Years Strategic Plan has been finalised following consultation and is ready for implementation in the spring term. Project planning has been finalised and settings identified for a pilot project to promote early language development.

Investment in our school buildings continues. Construction has commenced at the [Welsh medium Primary School Rydyfelin; Bryncelynnog Comprehensive](#); Pontypridd High and Hawthorn High. Work has also begun on three MIM Primary Schools (Pontyclun: Penygawsi; and Llanilltud Faerdref) following [confirmation of funding](#) approval from Welsh Government. [Planning permission](#) has been granted for YGG Llyn y Forwyn. All new build elements will be net zero carbon in operation. However, a MIM project to deliver a new secondary block for Ysgol Llanhari has been delayed due to current financial volatility in the worldwide markets.

Support for pupils to engage with careers and the world of work continued. 'Inspire me' was piloted in Porth Community school in November, delivering inspirational talks, activities and work experiences by people from the local community. We continue to work closely with the career leader network to maintain and develop Gatsby benchmarks within our schools, with all 20 eligible schools showing continued progress. The Green Light Project, which provides intensive careers guidance to vulnerable learners, has been extended to support those in danger of becoming NEET.

### **Increase the number of quality homes available and affordable to provide greater housing choice for residents**

The Council is working in partnership with Registered Social Landlords to increase the supply of energy efficient, low carbon homes. Following the addition of 2 new schemes, 22 of the 29 schemes (78%) in the social housing grant programme development plan are now categorised as 'new build – modern methods of construction'. Following the sale of Porth Infants School to Cynon Taf Community Housing Group, planning consent was gained in October and a S106 agreement is now

## **PROSPERITY - Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper**

being drafted. Rhondda Housing Association Wales are unable to progress the Skyline project due to it being unviable with further considerations planned in terms of options.

The [Local Housing Market Assessment](#) was [presented to Cabinet](#) and approved and will be used to inform the new RCT Housing Strategy, which is currently being produced.

Cabinet also approved the new [Empty Homes Strategy](#) on [17<sup>th</sup> October](#). The interventions, actions and support provided in the previous Empty Homes Strategy 2018-22 reduced the number of empty homes from 3,556 to 2,894. The new strategy contains [five clear objectives](#) to build on current progress. Council has also agreed to consult on proposals for a Council tax premium for long term empty homes. We continue to implement Houses into Homes loans to bring empty properties back into use, with £128,000 of loans completed during October to December. Welsh Government have considered and approved a national empty homes scheme, with RCT acting as Lead Administrator, which will make £50M available across local authorities.

Following research into best practice, the allocation of extra care provision via the social housing allocation policy has been approved and information is being updated to inform Homefinder applicants about the extra care offer. Review of the allocation process for applying for adapted housing is underway, following data analysis which has identified a large need for adapted/accessible properties. A user focus group has been set up to provide a customer perspective.

The [Rapid Rehousing Plan](#), which develops a housing led approach for rehousing people who have experienced homelessness, where possible reducing or removing the need for temporary accommodation, was approved by Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> July. Work is ongoing to source suitable properties to provide supported temporary accommodation for single person homeless households. Work continues to develop a Private Rented Sector strategy, which will be presented to Cabinet in due course, and to deliver the [Treforest Property Accreditation Scheme](#).

### **There will be a broad offer of skills and employment programmes for all ages**

Support for people seeking work continued through our Employment Support programmes. Between April and December 2022, 21% of those supported into work through the Communities for Work Plus scheme had work limiting health conditions and disabilities. Council staff continue to engage with Welsh Government to review future priorities and national funding arrangements. There was a slight delay in approval of the Shared Prosperity Fund regional investment plan from the UK Government, which was received in December. WG indicative funding allocation was also received in late December and more detailed delivery plans and staffing structures will now be developed. Links have been made between employment and youth services to provide support and training for identified young people leaving school with no destination for work, study or training through the Welsh Government Youth Guarantee Grant fund scheme. Engagement and employment outcomes for the scheme are positive, with annual targets already reached. CRF CELT (Community Renewal Fund Connect Engage Listen Transform) project delivery was completed at the end of December, with 218 engagements and 139 outcomes achieved. As part of the expansion of employment routes for 16 to 24 year-olds, the first cohort of the 'Black sheep' programme was delivered. This construction skills course is aimed at young people with a variety of learning needs. 8 young people completed the course, gaining 5 qualifications each. Employers offered 8 vacancies on completion, with 4 young people entering employment to date.

Work continues to develop work placements and work experience within the Social Work and Social Care sectors and improve engagement with schools and colleges. Although there have been delays in the Social Care Wales led work to develop guidance for work experience/apprenticeship

**PROSPERITY - Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper**

placements, potential work placements for Health and Social Care students from Coleg y Cymoedd will be explored in the new financial year and there has been good engagement from schools in the Ambassador programme.

20 new graduate and 45 new apprentices have now completed their inductions and commenced employment across a variety of services. However the next [Step in the Right Direction Traineeship](#) intake has been delayed to March 2023. 3 people with learning disabilities are currently completing Gateway to employment placements and 6 young people are currently on placement with Access to Employment, a 12-month programme for young people with barriers to employment who have been identified as having high potential. Five work placements were supported for the Care2work programme as part of the pilot [Care2Customer Service project](#) in partnership with Treorchy Business Improvement District. Following the successful pilot, further projects are being explored for 2023.

The final RCT kickstart placements completed during this reporting period, following the end of the scheme nationally. Kickstart provided funding for paid 6 month placements for young people on Universal credit and at risk of long term unemployment to gain work related experience and skills. In total 313 placements were administered through RCT acting as a gateway for the scheme. From 21 placements filled across the Council, 10 individuals secured ongoing employment within the Council following the end of the placement and 5 secured employment at other organisations.

We also continue to provide more informal learning opportunities to engage people in learning and support wellbeing, including a range of courses at Garth Olwg Centre. A series of family learning engagement programmes is being developed in targeted communities, with courses currently running in Penrhys and Pontygwaith Primary Schools.

The full action plan can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

## Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 3

<b>Progress in our Investment Priorities – PROSPERITY</b>		
<b>Investment Area</b>	<b>Investment Value<sup>4</sup> £M</b>	<b>Quarter 3 Update</b>
Empty Property Grant	2.213	54 applications have been received and are progressing in 2022/23. 42 applications have been approved and the remaining 12 are currently being supported by the Local Authority through to approval.
Schools	3.103	<p>This investment funding is supporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YGG Llyn Y Forwyn Primary (transferring the school to a new building on a new site) - site investigation surveys have been undertaken, land has been purchased, project / cost managers have been appointed to support delivery of the scheme and a Design and Build contractor has been appointed to undertake the land reclamation works and construct a new Primary school (the design development for the school is on-going). Welsh Government have approved the Outline Business Case and the scheme can now progress to Full Business Case.</li> <li>• Other works (as approved by Cabinet 21<sup>st</sup> March 2022) - toilet refurbishments (£0.300M), boiler replacements (£0.468M in 2022/23 and £0.232M re-scheduled to 2023/24), roof renewals (£1.445M) and classroom upgrades (£0.126M) – the majority of works were completed during the 2022 summer holidays and the remainder will be programmed for 2023/24.</li> </ul>
Transport Infrastructure	2.118	<p>This investment funding is supporting a wider programme of highways capital works including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progressing design work for pedestrian crossing enhancement projects at Groesfaen, Llanharan and Ty Nant (to improve road safety and promote active travel) – all projects are scheduled for construction from quarter 4 2022/23.</li> <li>• A4059 / Bowls Club junction - feasibility study completed to investigate junction / traffic flow improvements along the A4059, with the information being used to develop a preferred option.</li> <li>• A4059 Quarter Mile junction - feasibility proposals have been developed and the next steps will be preliminary design including ground investigation work.</li> </ul>
Park and Ride Programme	0.529	This investment funding is supporting the development work needed to create additional and formalised 'park and ride' car parking spaces with new and improved facilities such as Access

<sup>4</sup> Investment Value – relates to LIVE projects / works only that have been allocated additional investment funding.



Progress in our Investment Priorities – PROSPERITY		
Investment Area	Investment Value <sup>4</sup> £M	Quarter 3 Update
		for All, improved CCTV coverage and Electric Vehicle charging points at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Porth – phase 3 detailed design work has been completed.</li> <li>• Pontyclun - feasibility design to improve an existing facility has been undertaken and options are being considered.</li> </ul>
Drainage	1.000	This investment funding is supporting drainage and culvert network works. The ongoing programme includes: design and business case developments at 3 locations; design and works construction at 5 locations; and delivering, as match funding contributions, 21 Welsh Government grant funded schemes across the County Borough.
Robertstown and Coed Ely ERDF Match Funding	4.200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robertstown – the scheme is now complete.</li> <li>• Coed Ely – scheme completed and the tenant occupied the premises from July 2021.</li> </ul>
<b>Total</b>	<b>13.163</b>	

## **Section 6 – ENHANCING THE COUNCIL’S RESPONSE TO EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS**

The [18<sup>th</sup> December 2020 Cabinet meeting](#) agreed a series of recommendations to enhance the Council’s short and long term response to extreme weather events and which limit the impact of flooding on those communities most at risk.

The progress made by Council Services to implement the recommendations can be [viewed here](#) and will be scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **Section 7 –The Council’s response to tackling Climate Change**

On 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022, following engagement with residents and communities, Cabinet agreed its response to tackling Climate Change in a wide-ranging Climate Change Strategy – ‘Think Climate RCT’. Cabinet also agreed that the monitoring of the Strategy is included in the Council’s quarterly Performance Reports and thereafter scrutinised by the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.

[The Climate Change Strategy](#) contains a series of actions which are being developed to mitigate and adapt to the impact of Climate Change and to take steps that will reduce our Carbon Footprint and enable the Council to meet its ambitious targets by 2030, i.e.:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council will be a Carbon Neutral Council;
- Rhondda Cynon Taf will be as close to Carbon Neutral as possible; and

- Rhondda Cynon Taf will have contributed to the Welsh Government’s ambition of a Net Zero Public Sector.

Detailed plans that affect all services across the Council, structured around the Corporate Plan priorities, and a Decarbonisation Plan to support the reduction of the Council’s Carbon Footprint are in development. Key updates include:

- On 15 November 2022, [the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee](#) considered an Update Report on the [Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy](#), pre scrutinised the [RCT Tree, Woodlands and Hedgerow Strategy](#) and also considered an update on progress made to date on the Council’s [Porth Town Centre Strategy](#) including the Porth Transport Hub which, among things, is a key pillar in our plans to expand low Carbon Transport and Active Travel across RCT. We also [launched resident engagement](#) in respect of our Local Flood Risk Management Plan and proposals to [increase recycling](#) by moving to three weekly residual waste collections. On a seasonal note, ‘The Shed’ in Aberdare introduced [a pre Xmas Big RCT Toy swap](#) so that younger residents were able reuse and swop unwanted toys.
- At its meeting on 6 December 2022, [the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee](#) received reports on considerations of Hydro electric generation at [Treforest Weir and Dare Valley Country Park](#), feedback from [Pre Scrutiny of the Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Strategy](#), [the Council’s 2021/22 Carbon Footprint](#) and the statutory 3 yearly report to Welsh Government in respect of the Council’s Bio diversity duty under [Section 6 of the Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#). The next meeting of the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee is scheduled for [23 March 2023](#).

This is an on-going programme of work and progress updates will be incorporated within quarterly Performance Reports

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

### **CABINET**

**27 MARCH 2023**

### **REVIEW OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES**

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

**AUTHOR: Debbie Pike**

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

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to refocus some of the current Regeneration grant schemes available to local businesses in order to maximise the funding opportunities available from the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant (WGPG) and UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 The package of support outlined in paragraphs 5.1 – 5.8 is agreed.

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

The recommendations set out in this report will:

- 3.1 Enable the Council to provide a portfolio of financial investment which will support businesses to respond to the economic challenges they face, helping them build their resilience, support economic growth and diversification with the aim of stimulating future private sector investment.
- 3.2 Continue to deliver on the Council's commitment to support businesses, develop the local economy, regenerate town centres and encourage private sector investment in the high street economy, as set

out in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's 2020-24 Corporate Plan "*Making a Difference*".

- 3.3 Deliver on the Council's commitment to reduce the carbon emissions across the County Borough and support local businesses to become more sustainable, as set out in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's strategy "*Think Climate - Making Rhondda Cynon Taf Carbon Neutral by 2030*".
- 3.4 Ensure that the Council is able to take full advantage of the resources available for supporting local businesses from the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant (WGPG) and UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). This will allow for a more flexible approach that will maximise the reach of the grant offer and enable as many businesses as possible to be supported.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The economy in Rhondda Cynon Taf was severely impacted as a result of the devastating storms and flooding at the start of 2020 immediately followed by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown measures which lasted between 2020-2022. The situation has been exacerbated by the economic impact of Brexit, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the current high rate of inflation.
- 4.2 Businesses are now paying an increased cost for materials, products and particularly for energy which is impacting significantly on their profit margins. Consequently, many are now having to increase their prices to remain profitable which often means putting growth plans on hold. At the same time, the cost of living crisis creates a demand issue, with customers having less money available to spend.
- 4.3 There is now significant financial support available to local authorities from Welsh Government and UK Government until March 2025, to deliver schemes which will help businesses with their plans for setting up, sustainable growth, regeneration as well as carbon reduction and energy efficiency.
- 4.4 The Welsh Government's "Transforming Towns" initiative delivers financial support to enable local authorities to develop and deliver key regeneration projects across town centres and their nearby areas, and includes:
  - developing underused, empty/rundown properties into businesses, housing, leisure facilities, commercial premises or community facilities;

- improving the appearance of properties and/or reconfiguring them to make them more viable.

4.5 Two of the three key investment priorities of the UK Government’s Shared Prosperity Fund are “Communities and Place” and “Supporting Local Business”. Delivered through the RCT CBC Investment Plan, funding will support small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to grow, adopt productivity-enhancing, energy efficient and low carbon technologies, improve town centre retail and service sector infrastructure with the aim of creating jobs and increasing private sector investment, as well as investing in quality places where people want to live, work and play, through targeted improvements to the built environment.

**5. BUSINESS SUPPORT GRANT SCHEMES - PROPOSALS**

5.1 The schemes outlined below will provide a structured programme of investment of £4 million for local businesses, including funding from UK Government, Welsh Government and the Council’s own Capital Programme.

**5.2 Town Centre Maintenance Grant**

Purpose	To support minor improvements and small scale maintenance works to the external front elevation of properties (including vacant properties) which will contribute to a positive impact on the street scene, creating a more attractive and vibrant environment, which increases retail spend and stimulates further private sector investment.
Applicants	Town centre traders and landlords
Areas	8 main town centres – Aberdare, Ferndale, Llantrisant, Mountain Ash, Pontypridd, Porth, Tonypany, Treorchy.
Grant Rate	Up to 75% of eligible costs
Maximum Grant	Up to £2,000 (plus additional allowance of £500 for skip/scaffold)
Area of Refocus	The maximum grant has been increased from £1,000 (plus £300 skip/scaffold allowance) to take into account increased cost of materials and labour, and maintain a level of support that will make a difference to the street scene.

**5.3 Enterprise Investment Fund**

Purpose	To support Micro and SMEs to start up, grow and encourage energy efficiency as part of business improvements, which will contribute to creating a
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	vibrant and strong local economy.
Applicants	Start-ups and existing enterprises (both private and social). Cannot support projects where the applicant is solely the landlord.
Areas	RCT wide, subject to the applicant successfully demonstrating a clear and effective business proposal.
Grant Rate	Up to 75% of eligible costs (exc VAT)
Maximum Grant	Up to £15,000
Area of Refocus	The grant rate has been raised from 50% and the maximum grant raised from £10,000. The criteria has been broadened to include support for energy efficiency and carbon reduction measures.

#### 5.4 Commercial Improvement Grant

Purpose	To support larger scale improvements (primarily external) to commercial buildings with energy efficiency being intrinsic to design. Eligible works include replacement of shop fronts, windows and doors, stone cleaning, guttering, fascia boards and rainwater goods.
Applicants	Building owners or leaseholders
Areas	Properties that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• within 8 main town centres – Aberdare, Ferndale, Llantrisant, Mountain Ash, Pontypridd, Porth, Tonypany, Treorchy</li> <li>• Discretion can be applied to properties demonstrating severe market failure within Retail Centres which are defined by the RCT Local Development Plan.</li> </ul>
Grant Rate	Normally up to 50% of eligible project costs.
Maximum Grant	Up to £50,000
Area of Refocus	This is a new intervention which will address gaps in previous support measures in response to identified business need.

#### 5.5 Large Scale Property Improvements

Purpose	This grant will target buildings with vacant floorspace in key town centres and other strategic locations where severe market failure is demonstrated. Eligible works include all required building works required to achieve the project objective, which needs to be agreed with the Council in advance of an application.
Applicants	Building owners or leaseholders
Areas	Properties that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• within 8 main town centres – Aberdare, Ferndale, Llantrisant, Mountain Ash, Pontypridd, Porth, Tonypany, Treorchy</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discretion can be applied to properties demonstrating severe market failure within Retail Centres which are defined by the RCT Local Development Plan.</li> </ul>
Grant Rate	Normally up to 50% of eligible project costs.
Maximum Grant	£250,000
Area of Refocus	To support developments that are looking to encourage energy efficiency and reduction of carbon emissions.

- 5.6 Although all the funding available is for capital expenditure, it is anticipated that support for measures which aim to increase energy efficiency will have a positive impact in reducing running costs.
- 5.7 Any required statutory consents (e.g. planning permission, SuDS Approving Body) remain the responsibility of the grant applicant, and no offer of financial assistance can be made until these are in place.
- 5.8 Each scheme will have its own assessment criteria which will be robust but proportionate, depending on the different level of financial assistance available.

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

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full report is not required at this time. The screening form can be accessed by contacting the author of the report or the Cabinet Business Officer.

## **7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Each grant scheme will be developed in line with the Welsh Language Standards for Awarding Grants (April 2022) published in line with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015.

## **8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

- 8.1 The development of the financial support offer has been informed by intelligence of local businesses requirements. This has been gathered as a result of the delivery of existing Council led business support schemes as well as the significant amount of support delivered on behalf of Welsh Government during the Covid pandemic, feedback

from recent consultation exercises, including those on the draft Aberdare Strategy and Pontypridd Placemaking Plan.

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

- 9.1 The funding for these business support schemes will be allocated from existing resources comprising the Welsh Government Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant, the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund, and the Council's own core capital funding with the relevant match funding contributions being made by the private sector applicant.

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

- 10.1 Subsidy control legislation associated with any investment awarded as part of the schemes will be considered on a case by case basis.

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

- 11.1 This refocus of financial assistance the Council delivers to external organisations to support the local economy, is of crucial importance to develop the local economy, regenerate town centres and encourage private sector investment in the high street economy. This will directly complement the main priorities identified in the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024 'Making a Difference' of;

- People: independent, healthy and successful.
- Creating Places: where people are proud to live, work and play.
- Enabling Prosperity: creating the opportunity for people and business to be innovative, be entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper.

- 11.2 All activity will make a significant positive contribution to the goals of the Well Being of Future Generations Act. In particular, the economic and environmental well-being of Wales, supporting the delivery of a prosperous Wales, a more resilient Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

## **12. CONCLUSION**

- 12.1 Businesses currently face significant challenges following on from significant flooding events, the pandemic and now the energy crisis and high rates of inflation.



- 12.2 The refocus of these grant support schemes will enable the Council to provide a portfolio of financial investment which will support businesses to respond to these challenges, helping them build their resilience, support economic growth and diversification with the aim of stimulating future private sector investment.
- 12.3 The portfolio will also maximise the funding opportunities available until March 2025 from the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant (WGPG) and UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

**Other Information:-**

***Relevant Scrutiny Committee***

*Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity*

**Contact Officer:** *Simon Gale 01443 281114*

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

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

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**27 MARCH 2023**

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

**Item: REVIEW OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES**

**Background Papers**

None.

**Contact Officer: Simon Gale 01443 281114**