



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

COMMITTEE SUMMONS

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

Meeting Contact: Sarah Daniel - Scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a hybrid meeting of the **CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held on **MONDAY, 16TH JANUARY, 2023 at 5.00 PM.**

Non Committee Members and Members of the public may request the facility to address the Committee at their meetings on the business listed although facilitation of this request is at the discretion of the Chair. It is kindly asked that such notification is made to Democratic Services by Thursday, 12 January 2023 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

AGENDA

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1. DECLARATIONS 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 approve, as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting held on the 15th November 2022.

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3. CONSULTATIONS

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

OFFICERS' REPORTS

4. WELSH GOVERNMENT 20MPH SPEED LIMIT 2023

For Committee Members to review how the Welsh Government's legislation to reduce the speed limit from 30mph to 20mph on restricted roads across Wales will impact residents in RCT

13 - 22

5. HIGHWAYS INVESTMENT SCHEME

For members to Scrutinise the Highways Investment Programme

23 - 32

6. INFORMATION REPORT

For Members to receive the **UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund and the Investment plans for South East Wales and Rhondda Cynon Taf** report which provides details of the South East Wales Regional Investment Plan and the Council's lead authority role on behalf of the region and the investment plan and opportunities for Rhondda Cynon Taf

33 - 42

7. URGENT BUSINESS

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

8. CHAIRS REVIEW AND CLOSE

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

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Circulation:-

The Chair and Vice-Chair:
(County Borough Councillor C Middle and County Borough Councillor G L Warren respectively)

County Borough Councillors:

Councillor J Barton, Councillor P Binning, Councillor V Dunn,
Councillor E L Dunning, Councillor S Emanuel, Councillor D Grehan,
Councillor G Holmes, Councillor W Hughes, Councillor G Jones,
Councillor A O Rogers, Councillor W Treeby and Councillor R Yeo

Officers:

Christian Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Hybrid Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 15 November 2022 am 5.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors - Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance: -

Councillor C Middle (Chair)

Councillor G L Warren Councillor E L Dunning
Councillor S Emanuel Councillor G Holmes
Councillor W Hughes Councillor R Yeo

Officers in attendance: -

Mr A Roberts, Head of Energy & Carbon Reduction
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mr A Critchlow, Head of Streetcare Services
Mrs S Handy, Members Researcher & Scrutiny Officer

23 Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Committee and thanked Members for attending. The Chair also welcomed Cabinet Members County Borough Councillors A. Crimmings and M. Norris to the meeting.

24 Apologies

Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillors J. Barton and P. Binning.

25 SCRUTINY RESEARCH

The Members' Researcher and Scrutiny Officer referenced the research facilities that were available to Members within the Council Business Unit. Members were advised that if they have any specific queries to email them to Scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk.

26 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council's code of conduct, there were no declaration of interests pertaining to the agenda.

27 Minutes

The minutes of the 26th October 2022 were approved as an accurate record subject to the following amendments:

Item 7: Review of Mainstream School Transport

County Borough Councillor A Rogers requested for the minutes to include his concerns raised regarding pupils in Hirwaun not being able to have seating in the school bus.

County Borough Councillor V Dunn requested for her attendance to be marked as present for the meeting as the minutes indicate she was absent.

28 Consultations

The Members' Researcher and Scrutiny Officer referenced the consultation links, which were available through the 'RCT Scrutiny' website. Members were reminded that information is provided in respect of relevant consultations for consideration by the Committee, which are circulated on a monthly basis. Members were specifically referred to the consultation being run by Welsh Government regarding increasing public engagement in respect of climate change.

29 Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy

The Head of Energy and Carbon Reduction provided Members with a brief update on current progress of the strategy.

Members were advised that the strategy was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 9th December 2021 and published on the Councils Website in January 2022. Following the publication of the strategy, work continued with a development of a public facing Implementation Plan and Action Plan in consultation with all relevant service areas and the wider working group. The purpose of both the Implementation Plan and inherent Action Plan was to set objectives and milestones to signpost the way forward in delivering the 10 Ambitions set out within the Strategy.

Members were reminded that on the 29th September 2022, an overview of the Implementation Plan, Action Plan and related work streams was presented the Scrutiny Committee. It was resolved to endorse the Implementation Plan and associated Action Plan for submission to the next Climate Change Sub Committee; and, to review the practicalities of the Implementation Plan and related workstreams at a future Committee meeting. It was noted that the Implementation Plan and subsequent Action Plan have set out clear goals for the Council to aspire towards, including the short, medium and long-term targets in the development of charging infrastructure across the County Borough. The three main aims of the plan include:

- Identify key themes to support the Council's delivery of charging infrastructure across the County Borough, with a primary focus on off-street charging provision.
- Provide guidance and advice on best practice to develop a comprehensive network of electric vehicle charge points that both responds to existing demand for EV infrastructure and provides for and accelerates the uptake of electric vehicles in the future.
- Establish a clear set of actions to drive the delivery of the Council's EV Charging Ambitions.

The Implementation Plan and Action Plan are currently in the process of

undergoing translation and design, ready for publication onto the Council's website in the late Autumn of 2022. The Head of Energy and Carbon Reduction advised Members that the public facing Action Plan and the milestones contained therein are linked to the Council's Climate Change Strategy and will be used to monitor improvements in the delivery of charging infrastructure. The Action Plan will be accompanied by an 'Internal Delivery Plan' (IDP), providing actions and milestones for all Service Areas of the Council in aim of supporting the actions identified within the Action Plan. Progress of all ongoing workstreams relating to EV charging are consistently monitored against the Action Plan and Internal Delivery Plan.

The Head of Energy and Carbon Reduction continued by updating Members on the Electric Vehicle Charging Action Plan. It was noted that the Action Plan states that the Council will *"Review the processes by which Council fleet vehicles are replaced to ensure that ultralow emission vehicles are considered as a preference wherever feasible and practicable."* Indeed, the replacement of such vehicles to ULEV is heavily reliant on the provision of suitable charging infrastructure across the County Borough to enable the continued operation of Council services.

Considering this, works have begun to install sufficient charging apparatus at a range of Council-owned car parks, including Council Depots, Offices, Leisure Centres, and other Council facilities. Whilst the infrastructure installation is primarily for fleet use in the first instance, conversations are ongoing regarding the use of charging facilities by staff and the public, in a way that is both practicable, fair, and does not hinder the operation of Council services. In addition, the Council are focusing efforts on publicly available charging at Council car park facilities.

The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager shared a presentation which aimed to provide Members with an update on the work currently being undertaken by the Council as part of the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) with regard to installing electrical vehicle charging points across the region. Member were informed that the CCR embraces nearly 10 Local Authorities in Southeast Wales. The region as a whole has seen significant regeneration from Town Centres to Business Sites, Road and Railway and recently, electric vehicle technology.

The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager advised Members that the first phase of the project relates to off Streetcar parks. They are approximately 140-145 sites across the region where charging points are being installed; In RCT they are currently 31 sites spread across the Borough. Within the 31 sites there are multiple charging points ranging from 7 to 22 Kilo Watts also known as fast chargers. The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager advised Members that of the 31 sites, 29 have had EV Charging Point Installed. However, of those 29 sites, some have yet to be connected as a result of the WDP due to their inability to keep up with the fast-paced environment. The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager noted his disappointment as phase 1 should have been completed by the end of October; However, Members were advised that when phase 2 is launched, suggestions had already been put to the CCR and their appointed contractor to help mitigate such issues in the future. The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager advised Members that the level of charge will be priced at 35p per Kilo Watt hour at these sites.

The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager continued by advising

Members that Via the Office of Zero Emissions Vehicles, further funding has been provided towards phase 2 of the project which will see a further installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points at a further 28 sites. The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager briefly touched on phase 3 of the projects; he advised Members that funding has yet to be received regarding the project. Phase 3 will see an installation of EV Charging Points at a further 20 sites at various locations, potentially including libraries, and leisure centres.

The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager briefly touched on the use of Car Club vehicles through CCR; Car Club Vehicles will allow the public to rent vehicles for a couple hours etc. This will hopefully remove the need of vehicle ownership which as a result will reduce carbon emissions.

A Member inquired whether the grant funding from the Welsh Government will be available for the public to install charging points in their homes. He also requested timescales on when the EV Charging Points will be connected to the National Grid. The Member raised his concerns regarding the future roll out of the EV Charging Point due to the current delays.

The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager advised Members that he currently has dates for the connection of Electric Vehicle Charging Points at 7 of the 31 sites. The Officer acknowledged the concerns of the Councillor with phase 2 and emphasised that it was important that CCR and their appointed contractor learnt lessons from the delays incurred during phase 1.

The Head of Energy and Carbon Reduction advised Members that there are various property streams of grant funding available however, they are changed regularly. It was noted that when the strategy was being formulated, important links were installed within the report which can direct people to the appropriate websites which detail the grant funding.

A Member requested an update on the progress being made towards providing EV Charging Points for those who live in terraced housing and streets. The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager advised Members that there are no current plans for an on-street scheme in RCT. However, it was confirmed that one of the management training co-horsts, (Mercury) has a project to look into this matter.

A Member raised a query surrounding what strategy will be used to support wards which do not consist of facilities to support EV Charging Points. He also requested further information on how Car Clubs will work as he acknowledged there potential. The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager reassured Members that the EV Charging Points will be installed geographically within RCT to ensure that as many wards as possible are represented. He advised more information on CCRs Car Club will become available in due course.

A Member shared his concerns regarding the installation of EV Charging Points in car parks as it could limit the spaces available for normal car parking. He also voiced his concerns regarding the possible overload of EV Charging Points during such an early stage as they could become obsolete if a different alternative is established in the future.

The Parking Services and Enforcement Officer advised Members that the locations of the EV Charging Points have been allocated in areas with available land in order to not minimise disruption, he noted the importance of monitoring the roll out of the EV Charging Points. To add, the Head of Energy and Carbon

Reduction advised Members that the target set by Welsh Government in regard to EV Charging Points by 2030 is 28,000; it was noted that once phase 2 is complete there will be a total of 130 charging bays in RCT.

A Member inquired whether parking fines would be issued to those who park in bays dedicated for the use of the EV Charging Points without charging their cars. The Member also inquired if information or a map will be provided which shows where EV Charging Points are located in RCT. Lastly, he inquired on the number on EV Charging Points in the country.

The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager advised Members that fines would be issued if a vehicle is parked in a bay for other than its intended purpose. He also advised Members that a Zap Map will be provided to show where the live EV Charging Points are located in RCT. Information will also be on the Council's Website on the location of the live EV Charging Points.

A Member inquired on what methods would be used to encourage people to use electric vehicles within RCT; he also inquired on the average time it takes to charge an electric vehicle.

The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager advised Members that it takes approximately 8 hours or less to fully charge an electric vehicle depending on the speed of the charger. He advised Members that one way of encouraging the use of electric vehicle is by making it convenient to access charging points by offering different locations for the EV Charging points, bringing costs down and emphasising the importance of tackling climate change.

A Member inquired on whether planning applications has been considered in RCT as in Cardiff in relation to the installation of EV Charging Points in people homes. He noted that some areas may not have the infrastructure to support that power surge and as a result they may need to change the rewiring of their whole home.

The Director of Prosperity and Development advised Members that the LDP is currently being revised by the Council and issues relating to EV charging policies and commercial development will be looked at.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- Note the content of the report
- Agree to receive further updates, in future, concerning the delivery of the EV Charging Strategy Ambitions and their subsequent ongoing workstreams.

30 Tree and Hedgerow Strategy

The Members' Researcher & Scrutiny Officer presented the Cabinet report relating to the RCT Tree, Woodlands and Hedgerow strategy and advised Members that the purpose of this item was for Members comments and feedback to be fed back to Cabinet in their meeting on the 12th December.

Following this, the Director of Prosperity & Development presented his report to Members and provided a detailed overview of the strategy.

Discussion ensued and a Member noted that further consideration should be given on the spacing and planting of fruit trees in clusters to enhance growth, fruit yields and appearance of the trees within the environment and location.

Another Member queried whether the report should consider referencing legislation regarding dangerous trees as opposed to the policy referred to in the document. Members felt that the statutory legislation would supersede any local policy and should therefore be included; The Member also noted references within the report noting British Standard BS5837 and argued that this should be checked to confirm that they refer to the updated BS5837 (2012) standard and not previous versions with the name 'BS5837' identifier. The Member further commented that consideration should also be given to guidance set out by other advisory bodies and relevant associations, such as the NHBC or Royal Botanical Gardens publication and reference materials.

The Director of Prosperity & Development advised Members that the Brewery sector in RCT is growing and there has been discussion regarding where they get their apples from. Members were advised that the soil structure in RCT may not be conducive to orchards. However, the Director emphasised that discussions have only just commences and that Members will be kept updated on the progress being made. In respect of legislation, the Director agreed to include this in addition to the policy and also to include the updated version of the British Standards. The Director also agreed with the idea of referencing links to other documents and also informed Members about the 'Let's Talk Trees' pages currently on the Council website.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** for the comments and feedback of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee to be fed back to Cabinet at its meeting on the 12th December 2022.

31 Porth Town Centre Strategy

The Director of Prosperity & Development presented his report to Committee Members and updated Members on the progress made to date on the Porth Town Centre Strategy.

Members were reminded that the strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2019 following an extensive consultation exercise. The strategy sets out an integrated, co-ordinated and holistic approach to town centre regeneration that takes into account the distinctive role Porth has at the heart of the community and its important location for services, employment, housing and transport functions. The approved Strategy document is included at Appendix 1.

Members were directed to section 4 of the report which detailed the updates on Porth strategy current position. The Porth Town Centre Strategy consists of a range of co-ordinated and integrated physical development projects. There has been good progress made to date across the Strategy, with a number of projects underway, and other projects within their developmental stages. The Director of Prosperity and Development summarised the following projects that have progressed since the approval of the Strategy including:

1. Porth Transport Hub
2. Porth Plaza/Community Hub
3. Provision of additional long and short-term parking
4. Extension of the park and Ride provision
5. Redevelopment of underused and derelict buildings

6. Relocation of Council Staff into Porth Town Centre
7. Public Realm Improvements
8. Town Centre Maintenance Grant and;
9. Development of extra care housing for elderly and vulnerable

Discussion ensued and the Chair noted that there is a huge need across RCT for single bed accommodation. The Chair queried if there were any plans with Social Landlords to look at developing these old derelict buildings for regeneration. The Director of Prosperity and Development confirmed that those conversations are taking place through the local Council Market Assessment which identifies needs across RCT. He emphasised that there's always a balance to be struck and that sometimes-putting flats in town centres, particularly over older buildings, can cause controversy. There is a balance to be struck between regeneration needs, housing needs and parking needs.

The Chair queried what progress has been made to the old Bingo Hall in Porth. The Director of Prosperity and Development advised that despite efforts in negotiating with the owner of the Bingo Hall they were unsuccessful in their attempts to move anything forward.

A Member expressed his positive views toward the regeneration of Porth Town Centre and most importantly the integration for the Public Transport Hub. He inquired whether the strategy would consider the regeneration of areas outside of town centres which consist of considerable retail shops. The Director of Prosperity and Development advised Members that the Council as working with the Welsh Government Regeneration team in order to discuss the regeneration of highstreets. It was noted to include an update report on a future work programme regarding the regeneration of other town centres in RCT.

A Member inquired if work is being undertaken to the Porth Hotel as is for the Bingo Hall. The Director of Prosperity and Development advised Members that they are currently in talks with the owner to identify a solution for regeneration. It was confirmed that if the owner is not prepared to cooperate, sanctions will be issued.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- An update report to be provided to committee once the development is complete with the positive or negative impact made.
- A further report to be received 6 months later, to highlight the difference made to the Town Centre.

32 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business to declare.

33 Chairs Review and Close

The Chair noted the constructive discussion this evening and thanked Members for their contributions. The Chair asked Members to come in physically to the Chamber for future meetings where it is possible. The Chair also noted the date of the next meeting as being the 16th January 2023 and therefore wished all Members a lovely Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The meeting closed at 6.16 pm

COUNCILLOR C MIDDLE

CHAIR



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23

**CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

16th JANUARY 2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FRONTLINE SERVICES

WELSH GOVERNMENT 20MPH SPEED LIMIT 2023

Author: Tim Phillips – Head of Traffic and Transportation

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Members of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in respect to the Welsh Governments (WG) proposals to reduce the national speed limit from 30mph to 20mph on restricted roads across Wales.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members of the Committee:
- 2.2 Acknowledge the contents of the report and,
- 2.3 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise further the WG's proposals and the likely impact such changes will have on the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The ¹Welsh 20mph Task Force Group was formed in May 2019 on the direction of the then Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport. Their report proposing a reduction in speed limit on all restricted roads (roads with streetlights placed at least every 200yards) was published in July 2020.
- 3.2 Following the recommendations of the Task Force Groups report, the WG passed 'The Restricted Roads (20mph Speed Limit) (Wales) Order 2022' on the 13th July 2022, ensuring the national speed limit of 30mph on most restricted roads will be lowered to 20mph from the 17th September 2023.
- 3.3 In doing so, Wales will become one of the first countries in the world to introduce such legislation and the first in the UK to do so.
- 3.4 The change supports the Welsh Governments ²'Programme for Government', the ³'Llwybr Newydd: the Wales Transport Strategy' and ⁴'Future Wales, the national plan 2024' which sets the aims for people to live in places where travel has a low environmental impact.
- 3.5 The WG propose that reducing the national speed limit from 30mph to 20mph on restricted roads could see a number of benefits, including;
- A reduction in road collisions and severity of injuries of those involved in collisions between vehicles and vulnerable road users
 - make streets safer for playing, walking and cycling
 - encourage more people to make more sustainable travel choices
 - makes Wales more attractive for our communities
 - bring physical and mental health benefits
 - reduce noise pollution, promote cleaner air and will be better for the environment.
- 3.6 Whilst the WG's ⁵Public Attitude Survey (Nov 2020) indicated four in five Welsh adults said they would support a 20mph limit in the area in which they live, public scrutiny of such proposals has notably focussed on collisions, pollution, journey times, fuel consumption and ability for a lower speed limit to influence walking and cycling levels. The WG's response to each of these points is summarised below:
1. **Collisions** – World Health Organisation (WHO) states that the most effective way to improve pedestrian safety is to reduce the speed of vehicles. RoSPA states that 45% of pedestrians are killed when struck by a car at 30mph or less but only 5% when going at 20mph or less. In the distance a 20mph car can stop, a 30mph car is still doing 24mph.

¹ [Welsh 20mph Task Force Group \(gov.wales\)](#)

² [Welsh Government Annual Report 2022](#)

³ [Llwybr Newydd A New Wales Transport Strategy 2021: full strategy \(gov.wales\)](#)

⁴ [Update to Future Wales - The National Plan 2040 \(gov.wales\)](#)

⁵ [traffic-orders-and-20mph-public-attitudes-survey.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

2. **Pollution** – A study by Imperial College found that 20mph limited areas were “pollution neutral” as many things contribute to pollution levels, such as driving style, acceleration, braking, vehicle condition, distance travelled and engine temperature.
3. **Journey times** – In many cases lowering the speed limit to 20mph will have little or no impact on journey times. Where there was an impact, WG’s study showed that most journeys would only be around 1 minute longer.
4. **Fuel consumption** – A 20mph speed limit does not increase fuel consumption. Consumption is mainly influenced by the way we drive – driving at a consistent speed is better than stopping and starting. Accelerating up to 30mph can take twice as much energy as speeding up to 20mph.
5. **Walking and cycling** – Lower speeds mean that people feel more confident to walk and cycle and it is safer for children to walk to school. Older people, disabled people or people with additional needs will feel more able to travel independently. There is evidence from across the world that vehicle speeds are the main reason why people do not walk or cycle or do not allow their children to walk or cycle to school.

3.7 It is widely recognised that it would not be appropriate to apply a 20mph speed limit on all existing 30mph roads, especially on well-engineered routes that are principal corridors for movement, where there is little frontage development or community activity and where pedestrians and cyclists do not need to mix with motor vehicles. Such routes would therefore need to be made ‘exceptions’ to the default limit of 20mph and a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) introduced by the Local Authority (LA) to retain the existing 30mph limit.

3.8 In order to identify ‘exceptions’ the WG in conjunction with Transport for Wales (TfW) and LA’s developed a process and set of criteria to enable TfW to assess the road network of each LA to determine which roads should default to 20mph and which should be considered an ‘exception’ and therefore remain at 30mph.

3.9 In line with the WG aspiration to meet the aims of Article 11 of the United Nations ⁶Stockholm declaration (2020) a 20mph speed limit should be set where pedestrians and/or cyclists and motor vehicles mix in a frequent manner, except where strong evidence exists that higher speeds are safe. Therefore, to meet this objective, the following two principal questions were developed:

⁶ [stockholm-declaration-english.pdf \(roadsafetysweden.com\)](https://roadsafetysweden.com/stockholm-declaration-english.pdf)

A) Are there significant numbers (or potential numbers, if speeds were lower) of pedestrians and cyclists travelling along or across the road?

If the answer to A is 'no' then an exception for a 30mph speed limit may be appropriate.

B) If the answer to A is 'yes', are the pedestrians and cyclists mixing with motor traffic?

If the answer to B is 'no' then a 30mph speed limit exception may be appropriate.

If the answer to B is 'yes' then a 20mph speed limit will be appropriate unless the robust and evidenced application of local factors indicates otherwise.

3.10 To further assist LA's with assessing the need for exceptions on their network, the WG issued additional criteria to be considered when setting exceptions:

- Consider only 30mph roads
- Road Clarification (most exceptions made on A&B classified roads)
- Place Criteria
 - Within a 100m walk of any educational setting
 - Within 100m walk of any community centre
 - Within 100m walk of any hospital
 - Where the number of residential and/or retail premises fronting a road exceeds 20 properties per KM.

3.11 Sections of road which meet any of these Place criteria should be considered to positively answer principal question A. Although it is stated that LA's should continue to have the flexibility to set local speed limits that are right for individual roads, reflecting local needs and considerations although such decisions need to be clearly and robustly evidenced.

3.12 Following publication of the above assessment criteria, TfW undertook an assessment of all restricted roads across Wales to determine which were to default to 20mph and which were to remain at 30mph as an exception. The results of the process were issued in map format to the respective LA's to consider and make changes as necessary and then ultimately deliver on the recommendations made by TfW.

3.13 In order to test the outcome of the assessment process, eight communities were selected by the WG for the first phase of the 20mph national programme, with pilot 20mph limits introduced at the following locations:

1. St Dogmaels, Pembrokeshire
2. Llanelli North, Carmarthenshire
3. St Brides Major, Vale of Glamorgan
4. Central North, Cardiff
5. Cilfrew Village, Neath Port Talbot
6. Abergavenny, Monmouthshire
7. Severnside, Monmouthshire
8. Buckley, Flintshire

3.14 Whilst the findings from these pilot schemes are yet to be published by the WG, it has been widely reported through the media that several schemes have been negatively received by the community within which they are located and notably Monmouthshire CBC are in the process of removing sections of the 20mph limit and reinstating a 30mph speed limit at Severnside in Caldicot.

4. UPDATE / CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Whilst Welsh Ministers have the necessary powers to amend primary legislations to introduce a national default speed limit of 20mph on restricted roads, the Welsh Government is reliant on LA's to progress any TRO's required for the exceptions and to physically implement the required changes to the signing and lining infrastructure.
- 4.2 The Councils Traffic Services Team are leading on the delivery of the default limit across RCT with support from a variety of internal and external partners and agencies.
- 4.3 Officers have completed the first technical review of the exceptions map issued by TfW, with an amended version having now be provided by TfW.
- 4.4 The Councils Consultant Partners WSP have been commissioned by the Council to complete the technical assessment of the works required to amend the signing infrastructure across RCTs road network to reflect the change of default speed limit. To do this, officers have utilised the latest technology to asset map every road sign and carriageway marking across the entire road network which will enable engineers to identify which of the thousands of signs, markings, posts and other supporting infrastructure which either needs to be removed, replaced or new arrangements installed.

5. FUTURE PLANS

- 5.1 The next key stage in the delivery process is to initiate wider engagement, first meeting with Local Members and other key stakeholders to introduce the draft proposals and seek feedback on a local level. This process will commence in January and continue into February 2023 with Local Members receiving an invitation to meet with officers.
- 5.2 Officers will collate and consider all feedback received and identify the need for change where necessary and appropriate (taking account of the approved assessment criteria) before submitting final recommendations to Cabinet for approval. Once approved the Council will then publish the exceptions map via Data Map Wales before proceeding to initiate the Traffic Regulation Order process in respect to delivering the exceptions. This process will include engagement with the public and will likely conclude during spring/summer 2023.
- 5.3 In order for officers to meet the challenges of delivering such a significant infrastructure change to the highway network, it is vital that early preparatory works are undertaken where possible.
- 5.4 So to ensure officers meet the WG's objectives of implementing the default limit by the 17th September 2023, all non-statutory infrastructure that will no longer be permitted for use on the highway following the implementation of the 20mph default speed limit will start to be removed from the road network from mid-January 2023. Such infrastructure includes the red high friction surfacing and 20mph speed limit roundels located at many of the existing 20/30mph speed limit gateways.
- 5.5 As Members will duly note, officers are also acutely aware that such infrastructure tends to be concentrated around schools and other community hubs and their removal is likely to be perceived negatively by the community and therefore officers are in discussion with the WG in respect to what alternative measures may be legally permissible.
- 5.6 It is worth noting at this point that there will likely be a number of secondary benefits arising from the introduction of the of the default 20mph, that would be of particular interest to this committee. Recent changes to the regulations and general directions that control the use of signing on the highway have relaxed the need for most signs to be illuminated when situated within a 20mph limit. Therefore, in anticipation of the reduction in speed limit officers are actively compiling a list of illuminated signage present on the highway network with a view to replacing them with standard non illuminated signing arrangements. This will likely see the removal of a significant number of illuminated signs from the highway helping to reduce the Councils annual energy costs and overall carbon footprint.

- 5.7 Officers are due to bid for further WG Road Safety Capital Grant funding for FY 2023/24 to continue with the project and successfully deliver the recommended changes by the 17th September 2023. However, it should be noted that officers anticipate this project will continue far beyond this initial delivery date and possibly spanning the next several years. The scale of the changes will undoubtedly lead to secondary elements of work such as resolving anomalies on the network associated with the new default limit, responding to potential legal challenges to the newly set 20mph limit and requests to review existing 40mph, 50mph and 60mph limits on neighbouring roads.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Screening Assessment will have been completed by the WG in respect to the legislative change. However, RCTCBC will complete its own EIA prior to the commencement of the TRO process required to deliver any exceptions.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Consultation will be key to successfully implementing the proposed changes and the Council in pursuit of its duty as Highway Authority will undertake all necessary consultation in accordance with the requirements of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.
- 7.2 The WG is currently developing a wider communication campaign to support the introduction of 20mph limits across Wales, which is due to go live in January 2023. The WG will be supporting LA's in communicating these changes on a local level and will be providing a toolkit for LA communications teams that contains information reflecting the key narratives, topline and assets to use when publicising the initiative.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 There are significant financial implications associated with the implementation of the planned legislative change. The WG have committed to meeting the financial obligation on LA's in delivering the required legal and physical infrastructure changes to the highway network.
- 8.2 The WG has provided financial assistance to RCTCBC via the Road Safety Capital Grant, with a breakdown of funding set out below in table 1.

Financial Year	Grant allocation (£)
2021/22	53,500
2022/23	1,073,587
2023/24	2,264,000 (projected)
2024/25	TBC

Table 1 – RCT’s WG Road Safety Capital Grant allocation by year (realised and projected)

- 8.3 Funding allocation for 2022/23 of £1,073,587 has been awarded and officers expect to commit the full allocation against feasibility and design and an element of preparatory works to the highway in preparation of the main works later in 2023.
- 8.4 The WG have formally invited RCTCBC to bid for grant funding for the financial year 2023/24, with officers required to submit their bid by the 20th January 2023. Current projections suggest the value of the bid to be in the region of £2.26M.
- 8.5 The annual WG Road Safety Grant capital fund bidding process has effectively been deferred in favour of funding implementing the 20mph initiative.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 Whilst Welsh Ministers have utilised existing powers to change primary legislation to introduce a default 20mph speed limit on restricted roads in Wales, it will be necessary for the Council in pursuit of its duties as Highway Authority and in accordance with powers granted to it by the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and Local Authorities’ Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, to set higher speed limits on all roads considered ‘exceptions’ to the default 20mph limit following a period of public notice.
- 9.2 The WG task force have also identified various Legislation, Regulations, Guidance and Policy documents that will need to be revised prior to the implementation of the default limit on restricted roads. The WG are currently in the process of updating these documents in consultation with LA’s and other key stakeholders.

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

- 10.1 The Senedd has approved legislation to lower the default national default speed limit on restricted roads from 30mph to 20mph to reduce the number and severity of collisions and casualties, to enable more people to use active travel, to reduce environmental impacts and to improve people’s quality of life in communities across Wales.
- 10.2 The legislation supports the objectives set out in ⁷Llwybr Newydd: The Wales Transport Strategy 2021, which prioritises walking and Cycling above all other

⁷ [Llwybr Newydd A New Wales Transport Strategy 2021: full strategy \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/llwybr-newydd-a-new-wales-transport-strategy-2021)

modes of travel; and Future Wales, the national development framework which sets the aim for people to live in places where travel has a low environmental impact.

- 10.3 Many of the anticipated benefits of introducing a 20mph default speed will directly support the three main priorities of the Councils Corporate Plan (2020-2024) and help deliver on many of the objectives linked to developing People, Places and Prosperity.

11 CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The RCT Traffic Services Team continues to work to deliver this WG initiative across RCT in accordance with the newly implemented WG legislation. The aim of which is for WG to deliver their Wales-wide objectives of implementing a reduction in the national speed limit on restricted roads across Wales from 30mph to 20mph, subject to satisfactory completion of statutory procedures and in accordance with relevant regulations which includes for consultation with key stakeholders.

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23

**CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

HIGHWAYS INVESTMENT SCHEME

16th JANUARY 2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FRONTLINE SERVICES

Author: Andrew Griffiths – Service Director Highways & Engineering

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee with an update on the highway infrastructure within the County Borough

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the update on highways infrastructure within the County Borough with particular reference to the asset management strategy and investment strategy.
- 2.2 Note the expenditure required to maintain the highway infrastructure asset.
- 2.3 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise further the Highways Investment Scheme

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The highways infrastructure is the single biggest asset that the Council owns, valued at £3.32billion (2022 gross replacement cost – NB some elements of this

figure are based on nationally agreed standard construction rates which have not been uplifted in line with the recent high increases in construction costs).

- 3.2. The highways infrastructure consists of:
- 1,295km of carriageways
 - 1165km of footways
 - 1,580 highway structures including 197 road bridges
 - 29,513 streetlights
 - 134 traffic signals (signalised junction and pedestrian crossings)
- Plus surface water sewer systems, miscellaneous street furniture, signs, bollards, vehicle barriers, pedestrian barriers, etc
- 3.3 A Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) sets out a structured approach to managing the highway asset based around the following core elements:
- Hierarchy
 - Inspection
 - Defect
 - Repair
 - Programmed Repairs
 - Planned Maintenance
- 3.4 The first HAMP was published and then updated by the Council in 2012 and since that year the Council has utilised this and the evidence from the inspections to undertake a capital programme of works.
- 3.5 The UK Roads Liaison Group published guidance in 2016 – “Well Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice” which is supported, endorsed and recommended by key organisations including Department of Transport and County Surveyors Society Wales (CSSW). The Code of Practice promotes a risk based approach
- 3.6 In 2019 CSSW published Highway Asset Management Planning : Recommended Practices which contains the practices that CSSW recommends to local authorities to apply.
- 3.7 The CSSW document recommends that the HAMP is produced no later than every 5 years and an Annual Status Report (ASR) is produced on an annual basis with both documents helping the authority to identify works programmes and priorities.

4. UPDATE / CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Due to the extensive investment in the highway infrastructure with delivery a priority, the COVID pandemic and lack of staff resources (which has been recently resolved), a new HAMP and ASR will now be upgraded. Currently a number of the new ASR's have been completed in draft format.

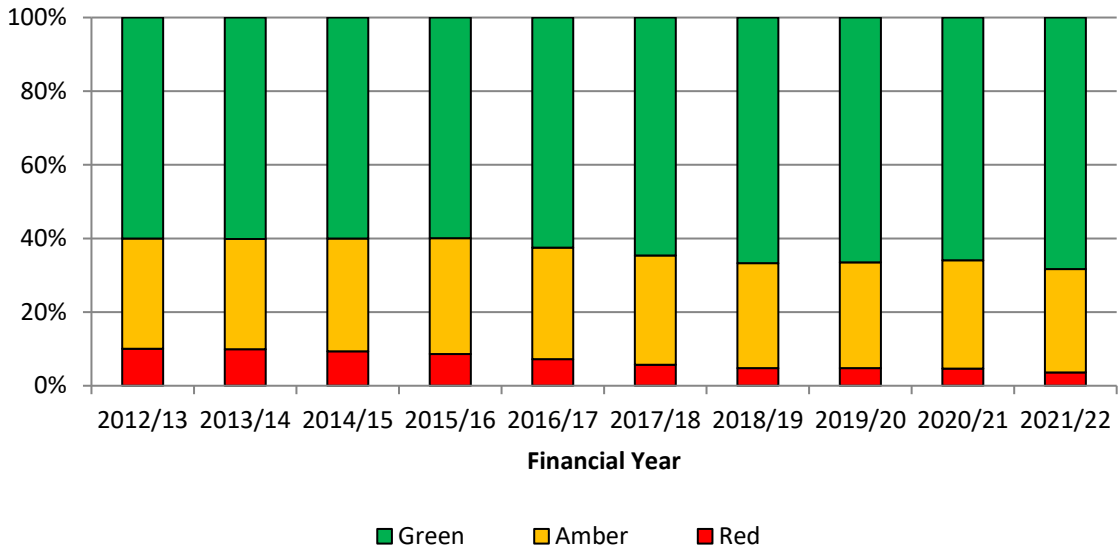
- 4.2 The Council has successfully obtained funding from the Welsh Government (WG) for funding in its highway infrastructure via Local Government Borrowing Initiative, Highways Refurbishment Capital Grant and Local Government Roads Maintenance Grant. All of these grants have now ceased and without continued Council investment the highway network will return to a deteriorating state. The Council in accordance with its predecessor Corporate Plan and the current Corporate Plan have recognised the importance of the highways infrastructure asset and has invested also via its RCTInvest programme.
- 4.3 The Infrastructure Asset Management Group staff resources has increased since 2015 in order to deal with the important highways infrastructure asset. A dedicated structures team is now in place which undertakes the general and principal inspections of the structures without having to outsource this resource to deal with it, thus making it more efficient and less costly. The traffic signals management has also been taken back in house from consultants and this has again improved efficiency and costs for the service.
- 4.4 Due to the extensive funding, the condition of the highway assets has improved. This has resulted in the following:
- **Investment in A class roads.** The amount of A class roads in a poor condition is 3.7%, this is 0.22% better than the Wales Median of 3.92% in 20/21 (No 21/22 comparison data is available) it is an improvement of 0.9% from last year.
 - **Investment in B class roads.** The amount of B class roads in a poor condition is 4.8%, while this is 0.33% worse than the Wales Median of 4.47% in 20/21 (No 21/22 comparison data is available) it is an improvement of 1.1% from last year.
 - **Investment in C class roads.** The amount of C class roads in a poor condition is 2.3%, 11.58% better than the Wales Median of 14.01% in 20/21 (No 21/22 comparison data is available), an improvement of 1.1% from last year.
 - **Investment in U class roads.** The amount of U class roads in condition band 4 is 8.7%, with 14.8% in condition band 3. It was anticipated that as part of the current investment programme the percentage in condition band 4 will be reduced to >6.5% which has already been achieved and the condition band 3 reduced to below 20% which is expected to be achieved in the current financial year. Due to the subjective nature of the survey some fluctuation year on year is anticipated. While the percentage of roads in the condition 4 band has risen this year the combined percentage in bands 3 and 4 has fallen from 25.95% to 23.53%
- 4.5 As a result of the investment in the highways infrastructure assets the amount of third party claims has reduced considerably from 446 in 2012/13 to 83 in 2021/22 – 75 less than in 2020/21.
- 4.5 All street lighting has now been converted to LED units. All concrete columns have now been replaced within the borough and the authority continues to maintain a testing and replacement programme for street lighting columns as part of its highway infrastructure asset management strategy. The Authority continues to replace its lit bollards with unlit bollards, with 316 remaining to be replaced out of a total of 636. Lit signage has been steadily replaced with LED units on the signage / poles with 2670 out of 3,800 converted to date.

- 4.6 Unfortunately, our bridge stock is in poor condition. Our average bridge condition indicator is 77.00% having improved slightly from a figure of 75.36% (three years ago). This trend is likely to continue over the forthcoming years as the number of inspections continues to rise. It should also be noted that the condition of our bridges has improved from 57% in 2012/13. Having enhanced our bridge inspection regime we are now in a much better position to effect early interventions, which reduce the long-term financial liability on our structures.
- 4.7 In 22/23 to date, 119 carriageway schemes have been completed out of 161, 45 footway replacement schemes out of 70 have been completed, all 5 roads requiring surface treatments have been completed and 10 out of 22 unadopted roads have been brought to adoptable standard. The remaining schemes in all categories will be completed by end of March 2023 subject to weather conditions.
- 4.8 The Traffic Management element of the Highways Investment Programme is nearing completion and includes small traffic management schemes, disabled parking, residents parking, Traffic Regulation Orders, etc.

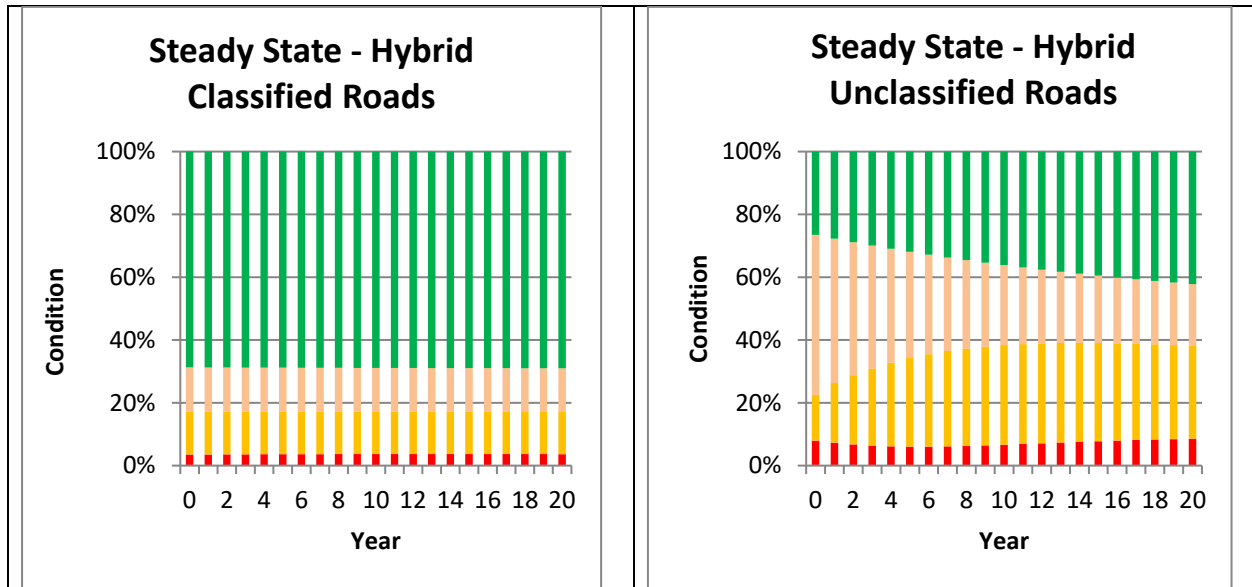
5. INVESTMENT STRATEGY

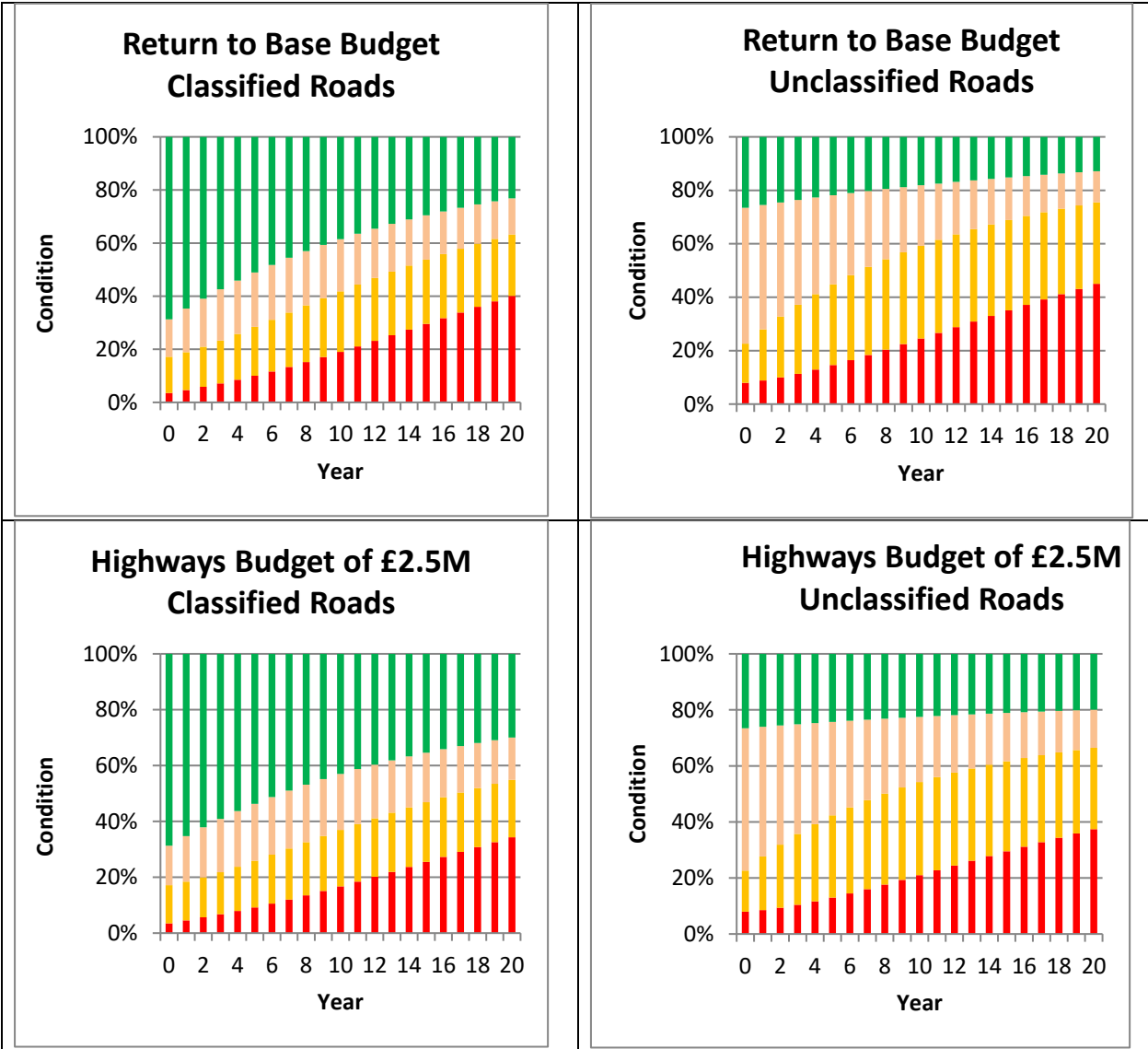
- 5.1 The Council's strategy for investment in highways in the short term is to continue to invest to improve the asset for the next 2 years. It is then hoped that investment will continue at a level suitable to maintain a steady state condition in the medium term although it is considered unlikely that long term funding at this level will be available.
- 5.2 The investment within the highways element (not including structures) will reduce in 23/24 to an anticipated £2.5m. Based on this information the decline in the condition of the highways is modelled.
- 5.3 Classified road condition has improved dramatically in the last 10 years. Prior to the beginning of the Council's Highway Improvement Scheme in 2011, the network was deteriorating. Since 2011 the condition has been improving due in part to LGBI investment (2012/13 to 2014/15) and LGPHRG. However, without continued investment at or above the steady state projection deterioration will resume.

HISTORICAL CONDITION - CLASSIFIED ROADS



5.4 Condition projections for highways need to be made over an extended time period. The tables below project the condition of the classified and unclassified carriageway networks for 20 years based on a return to base budgets a steady state option and, continuation of current Council funding levels. There are many possible steady state options ranging from a totally preventative approach (£4.4M) which allows all roads already in the red band (worst condition) to remain untreated and prevents roads in the green and amber bands from deteriorating into the red, to a worst first strategy (£21M). The projection modelled below is based on a hybrid strategy (£7.3M) in which some of the worst condition roads are repaired each year.





5.5 If Council capital funding levels return to the base budget. The network will deteriorate considerably with more than 10 times the current amount of the network being in the RED condition and almost double the current amount in the AMBER condition by year 20. This equates to approximately an additional 645km of the road network being in the red or amber condition bands, with 478km of this in the red band

5.6 If Council capital funding levels are set at a budget of £2.5M/year for the highway function (roads, footways, drainage, safety fences) The network road trend of improving condition will reverse and the network will return to deterioration with an extra 557km of the network would be in the red band and amber bands with 386km of this in the red band by year 20.

- 5.7 £45M has been invested in the last 10 years on the repair of the Council's structural assets including road bridges, footbridges, culverts, retaining walls and parks structures.
- 5.8 The Infrastructure Asset Management team are also responsible for the parks structural assets. £3.3M has been invested in repairs to parks structures in the last 4 years.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

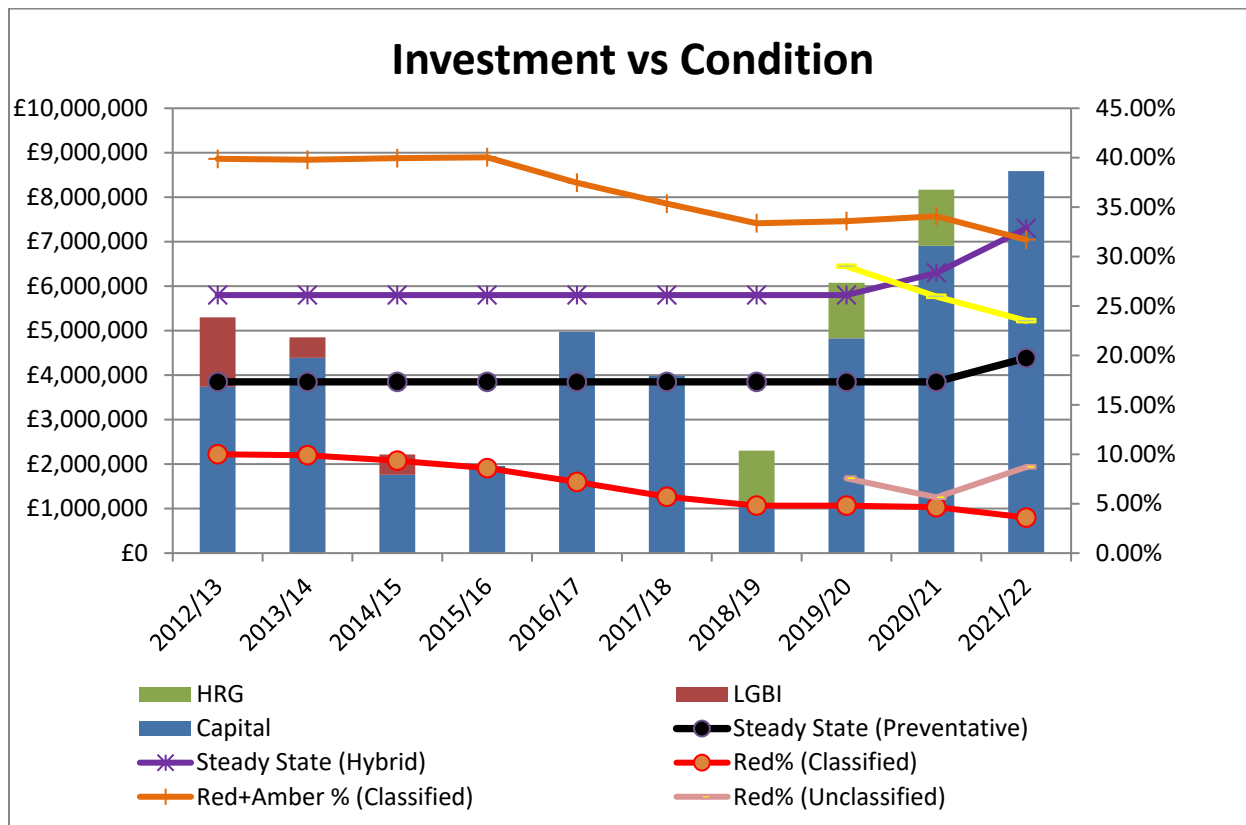
- 6.1 There are no negative or adverse equality or diversity implications associated with this report. However it should be noted that lack of investment within the highway infrastructure could lead to potential problems for people with mobility issues

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 There are no consultation implications aligned to this report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 Between 2012/13 – 2014/15 the Council has secured £11.304m from WG via its Local Government Borrowing Initiative to invest in highway infrastructure assets.
- 8.2 Between 2017/18 – 2021/22 the Council has secured £6.912m from WG via its Highways Refurbishment Capital Grant.
- 8.3 The Council secured £756,621 from WG in 2020/21 via its Local Government Roads Maintenance Revenue Grant.
- 8.4 Between October 2015 to March 2023 the Council has invested £56.174m in its highway infrastructure assets ie carriageways, structures, park structures, etc.
- 8.5 In March 2022, Council approved a further significant investment of £28.628million over the next 3 years (22-25)



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

8.7 The estimated steady state renewals investment requirement for carriageways is £4.386M per annum. This is a theoretical cheapest option where it is accepted that the worst roads (red band) will remain in poor condition and all funds are spent on preventative treatments to prevent them from deteriorating into the red band. In practice, however, in reality a hybrid strategy is used which repairs some of the worst roads and carries out some preventative maintenance. It is estimated that utilising the hybrid strategy an annual budget of £7.3M would be required to maintain a steady state. These figures are for carriageways only and do not include footways, drainage, structures, etc.

8.8 The Council has received £7.066m in 22/23 from the Welsh Government via its various funding sources, ie Active Travel Fund, Unadopted Roads, Safe Routes in the Community, Bus Infrastructure Fund and 20mph speed limit. This together with a £1.629m match funding has allowed £8.647m to be invested via Welsh Government into the highway infrastructure.

8.9 The Council has also been successful in obtaining £11.417m in 21/22 to be utilised over 3 years for the A4119 Coed Ely dualling from the UK Govt Dept of Levelling Up. This together with funding from within the Council and Welsh Govt has allowed this vital strategic £22.3m project to commence on site.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

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

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

- 10.1 The highway strategy and investment is in accord with the Council's Corporate Plan ie PLACES – where people are proud to work, live and play – keeping the County Borough moving, including improvements to roads and pavements and public transport, whilst also improving air quality. This will be delivered by continuing to improve the condition of our roads and pavements and investing in our bridges, retaining walls and sustainable flood drainage systems.
- 10.2 This strategy is in accord with the Well being of Future Generations Act 2015 in particular the national well being goal of A More Prosperous Wales by keeping people and traffic moving on well-maintained roads and pavements and progressing schemes that will benefit communities now and in the future.
- 10.3 As part of its commitment to reduction in the carbon footprint and achieving net carbon zero the Council has implemented a number of initiatives. The Service Area is responsible for the promotion, implementation and maintenance of Active Travel routes which promotes the use of alternative sustainable transport rather than the motor car. The emphasis is on the provision of dedicated off road alternatives for the public to walk or cycle to destinations including schools, transport facilities, shops, etc. The Council is currently undertaking the Brook Street Footbridge Replacement which will provide access to Active Travel routes together with other projects including upgrading sections of the Taff Trail, Cynon Trail and links to the Church Village Bypass.
- 10.4 The service area has been implementing bus boarders, throughout the borough which will make the use of public transport more accessible to people of varying mobility thus encouraging the use of public transport rather than personal motor vehicle which will reduce the carbon footprint.
- 10.5 All RCT street lighting is now LED which uses less energy and whilst saving on electricity charges also reduces the carbon footprint. The Service area is also looking to implement a power reduction on 3,000 of the newer LED lanterns which will again reduce carbon footprint.
- 10.6 The Council has been working closely with the Cardiff Capital Region to successfully secure funding to install public-use electric vehicle (EV) charging points at 31 car park sites, which are in located in visible, accessible and reliable locations such as public car parks and leisure centres across Rhondda Cynon Taf, with work on this currently underway. The Council have also developed proposals

to deliver a further 29 sites by the end of the financial year. Thus making facilities for the public to switch to electric cars reducing the carbon footprint.

- 10.7 The service area is also investigating the use of warm mix asphalt instead of hot mix asphalt which is produced at 40 degrees Centigrade less, thus resulting in 15% less carbon omitted during the process (National Highways – English operators).

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 Without sustained levels of investment at, or above the projected steady state figure, the carriageway network will be subject to ongoing deterioration. This would result in increased sums being expended on inefficient small scale reactive repairs and third party claims payouts, less efficient networks with longer journey times and increased levels of pollution.
- 11.2 As can be seen from the graphs earlier, without sustained levels of both Council and HRG investment, the network condition would return to a deteriorating state.
- 11.3 While it is not yet known whether the Council will be able to sustain any funding above the base budget level beyond its current 3 year investment programme, it is hoped that in the medium term additional funding will be made available. It is however, very unlikely, even with a continuation of HRG, that steady state funding will be available in the long term.
- 11.4 If Council funding returns to base budgets, without HRG funding the network would deteriorate at an ever increasing rate with an additional 185km of the network being in the RED and AMBER condition bands after 20 years compared to the condition achieved through base council funding combined with a continuation of HRG.
- 11.5 Investment is also needed to continue in highway structures and park structures to maintain the longevity of the asset and also ensure that the assets are inspected and maintained at an appropriate time to minimise expenditure.
- 11.6 Frontline Services continues to deliver the projects within the Highways Investment Programme in the current challenging conditions.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23

CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE UK GOVERNMENT SHARED PROSPERITY FUND AND THE INVESTMENT PLANS FOR SOUTH EAST WALES AND RHONDDA CYNON TAF

16 JANUARY 2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT, IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNCILLOR NORRIS

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to:

- 1.1 Provide an update on the UK government Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which supports the government's wider commitment to level up all parts of the UK and provides funding for local investment between 2022 and 2025.
- 1.2 Provide detail of the South East Wales Regional Investment Plan and the Council's lead authority role on behalf of the region.
- 1.3 Provide detail of the investment opportunities for Rhondda Cynon Taf and provide detail of the RCT local investment plan.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the contents of this report; and
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any further matters arising from the report.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Following the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union on 31st January 2020, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is the UK Government's replacement for the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).

- 3.2 The UKSPF will provide £2.6 billion of support for local investment and is a key part of the UK Government Levelling Up agenda, forming part of a range of complementary funding, including the Levelling Up Fund and Community Ownership Fund.
- 3.3 The Fund will support the UK Government Levelling Up objectives which are to:
- Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging.
 - Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest.
 - Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost.
 - Empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.
- 3.4 The primary aim of the UKSPF is to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK. Underpinning this aim are three investment priorities:
- The **Communities and Place** investment priority will enable places to invest to restore their community spaces and relationships and create the foundations for economic development at the neighbourhood-level.
 - The **Supporting Local Business** investment priority will enable places to fund interventions that support local businesses to thrive, innovate and grow; and
 - The **People and Skills** investment priority will help reduce the barriers some people face to employment and support them to move towards employment and education. As part of this priority, there is also a dedicated and ringfenced element called **Multiply**, which seeks to improve adult numeracy skills through free personal tutoring, digital training, and flexible courses.
- 3.5 Each of these investment priorities include a wide range of eligible interventions which provide significant opportunity to develop a flexible funding package.

4.0 DELIVERY OF UKSPF IN SOUTH EAST WALES

- 4.1 In Wales, local government has been given responsibility for developing four regional investment plans for approval by the UK government, and for the subsequent management and delivery of the Fund.

- 4.2 For South East Wales, one regional investment plan has therefore been developed to cover the 10 local authority areas in the Cardiff Capital Region and was submitted to UK Government for assessment on 1st August 2022.
- 4.3 Each local authority has also had to develop their own local investment plan to reflect local needs and opportunities, and these underpin the regional submission to UK Government.
- 4.4 UK Government require a lead local authority to receive the UKSPF allocation to manage on behalf of a region and for South East Wales, RCT Council is undertaking this role. There will however be local flexibility in each authority area over how the fund is best delivered, for example, competition for grant funding, procurement, commissioning, or in-house delivery.
- 4.5 Approval from UK Government of the 3 year regional investment plan for the period April 2022 to March 2025 was received on 5th December 2022 although funding for the years 2023/24 and 2024/25 will be paid annually subject to the delivery of forecast outputs, outcomes and spend for the previous financial year.
- 4.6 The Fund can support investment in activity that started from 1 April 2022 where it clearly fits with the relevant interventions and all Fund requirements.
- 4.7 At this time, no funding will be provided for programme closure activity after 31 March 2025. Conversations with UK Government officials regarding this are however ongoing.

5.0 FUNDING ALLOCATIONS

5.1 Across Wales there is a total allocation of £585M which includes £484M core SPF funds and a further £101M for Multiply (Multiply is a UK Government programme for improving adult numeracy skills). The allocation for the South East Wales region is £278M, the detail of which is set out in the table below at 5.2. The formula UK Government has used to allocate the funding is;

- 40% of funding is allocated on a per capita basis across Wales.
- 30% of the allocation uses the same needs-based index previously used to identify UK Community Renewal Fund priority places.
- 30% is allocated using the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.

5.2 The following table details the indicative allocation per Authority within the South East region:

Local Authority	Core UKSPF £	Multiply £	Total £
Blaenau Gwent	23,301,572	4,863,920	28,165,492
Bridgend	19,116,296	3,990,295	23,106,591

Caerphilly	28,272,298	5,901,499	34,173,797
Cardiff	34,587,594	7,219,740	41,807,334
Merthyr Tydfil	22,698,977	4,738,136	27,437,113
Monmouthshire	5,919,533	1,235,631	7,155,164
Newport	27,177,563	5,672,986	32,850,549
Rhondda Cynon Taf	37,320,994	7,790,305	45,111,299
Torfaen	20,431,241	4,264,774	24,696,015
Vale of Glamorgan	11,606,505	2,422,717	14,029,222
Total	230,432,573	48,100,003	278,532,576

- 5.3 The scale of available funding for Multiply is significant and hugely challenging across the programme period particularly in the first financial year where at the time of submission of the regional plan, a projected underspend of 50% was envisaged. However, with time to build capacity on the supply side and work on the demand side this level of underspend could be reduced to a minimum of 10% in year 2 and 5% in year 3.
- 5.4 The approval received from UK Government on 5th December for the regional investment plan currently excludes the projected Multiply regional underspend of c.£9.8m but conversations are ongoing with UK Government regarding flexibility with this part of the programme and utilisation of the projected underspend.
- 5.5 It is recognised that some activity is more suited to delivery at a regional rather than local level. A notional allocation of 1.43% (c.£3.3 million) is therefore being top sliced from the South East allocation for the Cardiff Capital Region to deliver a small but focussed regional programme of activity in the following areas:
- Cluster growth activity;
 - Development and roll out of the Assured Skills Academies; and
 - Strategic development of regional tourism and place focussed proposals.

6.0 LEAD AUTHORITY FUNCTION

- 6.1 As lead authority, RCT has a single funding agreement with UK Government for the full South East Wales allocation. There will however be back to back Service Level Agreements between RCT and the other nine local authorities to pass on accountability for local delivery and the terms and conditions of the UK Government funding.
- 6.2 Additional capacity is required to fulfil the obligations of the lead authority role and 4% of the total allocation for the region can be used to fund administration. It has been agreed with each authority that RCT will retain 40% of the available 4% (approx. £4.5m). An additional capacity payment of £40,000 in year one is also available to RCT for developing the regional investment plan.

6.3 A new Shared Prosperity Team is therefore being established within RCT with the Programme Manager, Programme Accountant and Project Management & Delivery Lead Officer appointed on an internal secondment basis from September 2022. The recruitment process for the remaining posts will commence in January 2023.

7.0 RHONDDA CYNON TAF LOCAL INVESTMENT PLAN

7.1 RCT has 16.2% of the allocation for South East Wales with a total of £45,111,299 which includes £37,320,994 core SPF funds and a further £7,790,305 for Multiply. This is the highest allocation of all Welsh local authorities.

7.2 The indicative allocation is distributed across the three financial years as follows:

Financial Year	Core SPF	Multiply	Total Annual Allocation
2022/23	£4,529,246	£2,355,209	£6,884,455
2023/24	£9,058,494	£2,717,548	£11,776,042
2024/25	£23,733,254	£2,717,548	£26,450,802
Total Allocation	£37,320,994	£7,790,305	£45,111,299

7.3 As highlighted in paragraph 5.4, the approval from UK Government currently excludes the projected Multiply underspend which equates to £1,585,236 for RCT. The total approval to date is therefore £43,526,062.

7.4 An amount of £628,247 will also be top sliced from this approval as a contribution towards the CCR regional activity described in paragraph 5.5.

7.5 The 3 main investment priorities for the UKSPF of Communities and Place, Supporting Local Business and People and Skills includes a wide range of eligible interventions. In RCT this will allow us to align many of the priorities identified in the Council's Corporate Plan with the investment priorities.

7.6 The RCT local investment plan includes projects that will deliver against a range of Council priorities including, but not limited to the following:

- Development and resilience of communities by improving facilities and access to services and supporting community-based organisations.
- Action to support individuals and community-based organisations to deal with the challenges of the current economic environment and cost of living crisis.
- Supporting the improvement and redevelopment of town centres and community places to revitalise them.

- Small business support and development including finance for growth and resilience.
- Small business support for key growth sectors, research and development and innovation.
- Employability and Skills initiatives to support people in employment and in key sectors, unemployed and economically inactive people and young people to enter employment.

7.7 The RCT local investment plan projects will deliver against a range of eligible UKSPF interventions within each of the three investment priorities:

Investment Priority	UKSPF Intervention
Communities and Place	Funding for improvements to town centres and high streets, including better accessibility for disabled people. Examples include small scale grants to improve external envelope of town centre properties and strategic site developments such as the former M&S site, Pontypridd.
	Funding for new, or improvements to existing, community and neighbourhood infrastructure projects including those that increase communities' resilience to natural hazards, such as flooding, and investment in locally owned renewable energy generation and waste management. Examples include grant support for energy efficiency measures and installation of solar panels.
	Design and management of the built and landscaped environment to 'design out crime'. Examples include funding of Wardens and Community Safety Officers.
	Support for active travel enhancement and other small-scale green transport infrastructure projects. Examples include subsidised public transport to encourage car free commuting.
	Funding for impactful volunteering and/or social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places. Examples include Neighbourhood Network and Community Resilience Hubs to increase connections, knowledge, best practice and resources between community groups and services.
	Community measures to reduce the cost of living, including through measures to improve energy efficiency, and combat fuel poverty and climate change. Examples include a competitive grant programme of support for community groups and organisations across RCT.
Supporting Local Business	Strengthening local entrepreneurial networks and supporting businesses at all stages of their development. Examples include grants to new and existing business to start up, expand and diversify and grants to support self-employment in the social care sector.
People and Skills	Employment support for economically inactive people including intensive and wrap-around one to one support to move people closer to mainstream provision and to gain and retain employment. Examples include tailored and intensive support delivered through mentors / key workers and referrals to local training, skills and specialised support.

7.8 Lead officers have been identified for all project proposals included within the investment plan and individual schemes will be reported to SLT and Cabinet in due course.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

8.1 There is no requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment or Socio-Economic Analysis for the purposes of this report, but these will be accounted for as part of the development and delivery of the associated projects.

9.0 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There is no requirement for a Welsh Language Impact Assessment with this report, but this will be accounted for as part of the development and delivery of the associated projects.

10.0 CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

10.1 There is an expectation that local authorities engage with local partners and stakeholders to ensure that investment plans are comprehensive, and that any interventions do not duplicate existing provision.

10.2 Over recent months, partner authorities and Cardiff Capital Region officers have commenced engagement with key stakeholders in the public, private and third sectors together with respective MPs to help inform the development of emerging project proposals and the overarching regional investment plan. This engagement will continue as authorities enter the delivery phase.

11.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

11.1 It should be noted that there is no requirement from UK Government for match funding although authorities are encouraged to consider the inclusion of other funding sources to maximum the impact of the UKSPF.

11.2 The Council will require additional staff resources to ensure effective management and delivery of the funds. 4% of the total allocation for the region (as detailed in paragraph 6.2) can be used for administration costs some of which will be retained to ensure RCT has sufficient resource/capacity to undertake the lead authority role, and the remainder distributed to each local authority to support the administration of their local investment plans.

11.3 In addition, the Council can also use up to 4% of its local allocation to undertake necessary management and administration of the RCT local investment plan including costs for contracting, monitoring and evaluation and ongoing stakeholder engagement.

12.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

12.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report, but as lead authority, RCT has a single funding agreement with UK Government for the full South East Wales allocation and there will be back to back Service Level Agreements between RCT and the other nine local authorities to pass on accountability for local delivery and the terms and conditions of the UK Government funding.

13.0 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

13.1 The 3 investment priorities of the UKSPF – Communities and Place, Supporting Local Business and People and Skills 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.

13.2 All activity within the local and regional investment plans will need to contribute 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.

14.0 STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

14.1 Successful delivery of the local and regional investment plans and its associated projects are of strategic significance to Rhondda Cynon Taf and the wider South East Wales region.

15.0 CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

15.1 The UKSPF will provide £2.6 billion of support across the UK during the period 2022 to 2025 and is a key part of the UK Government Levelling Up agenda.

15.2 In South East Wales, £278.5M is available during this period with £45M of this allocated for local investment in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

15.3 Within the context of the Fund’s aims, each authority area has the flexibility to invest across a range of activities that represent the right solutions to improve local pride in place, increase life chances, to help spread and create opportunity, and a sense of community and belonging.

- 15.4 Back to back legal agreements between the Council and the other nine local authorities in South East Wales will be finalised and delivery will commence at the earliest opportunity in all areas.
- 15.5 In RCT, lead officers have been identified for all project proposals included within the investment plan and individual schemes will be reported to SLT and Cabinet in due course.
- 15.6 Recruitment for the remaining posts within the core Shared Prosperity Team will commence in early January to ensure the Council has sufficient resource/capacity to undertake the lead authority role.

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