



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting of the CABINET will be held on
Tuesday, 6th September, 2022 at 2.30 pm

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

Councillors and members of the public wishing to request the facility to address the Cabinet on any of the business as listed below, must request to do so by 5pm on the Friday, 2 September 2022 Councillors and Members of the public should stipulate if this address will be in the medium of English or Welsh.

It must be noted that the facility to address the Cabinet is at the discretion of the Chair and each request will be considered based on the agenda items being considered, the public interest/interest of the member in each matter and the demands of the business on that day. To make such a request please email:- ExecutiveandRegulatoryBusinessUnit@rctcbc.gov.uk

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

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

Note:

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

2. MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on the 18th July 2022.

3. LOCAL COST OF LIVING SUPPORT - SUPPLEMENTARY (DISCRETIONARY) SCHEME

To receive the report of the Director, Finance and Digital Services, which provides the Cabinet with details of a local Supplementary (Discretionary) Cost of Living Support Scheme.

(Pages 13 - 16)

4. COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN - INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

To receive the report of the Director, Finance and Digital Services, which sets out the position regarding the opportunity for Cabinet to propose to Council to further invest in the Council's priority areas, aligned to the Corporate Plan, "Making a Difference" 2020 – 2024.

(Pages 17 - 22)

5. INTRODUCTION OF A NEW SOLAR PANEL GRANT AND THE EXTENSION OF THE DOMESTIC HEATING GRANT

To receive the report of the Director, Prosperity and Development which proposes to establish a new solar panel grant scheme for residents of RCT; and to extend the current domestic heating grant scheme until 2025 for residents of RCT.

(Pages 23 - 32)

6. ULTRA LOW EMISSIONS VEHICLES (ULEV) TRANSITION PLAN

To receive the report of the Director, Frontline Services, which outlines the Council's plan to transition from an Internal Combustion Engine, (ICE), fleet to an Ultra-low Emissions Vehicles, (ULEV), fleet over the next 6 years. The scope, and primary focus of the report, relates to the Council's Light Goods Vehicle, (LGV), Fleet.

(Pages 33 - 42)

REPORT FOR INFORMATION

7. LEADER'S SCHEME OF DELEGATION - 3A

To receive the updated [Leader's Scheme of Delegation](#).

8. URGENT ITEMS

To consider any urgent business as the Chairman feels appropriate.



Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Circulation:-

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

Officers: Chris Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Barrie Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Louise Davies, Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services
Richard Evans, Director of Human Resources
Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Neil Griffiths, Head Of Financial Services - Community & Children's Services
Paul Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services
Christian Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Derek James, Service Director – Prosperity & Development
Paul Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services
David Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Andy Wilkins, Director of Legal Services
Neil Elliott, Director of Adult Services



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 18 July 2022 at 1.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors - Cabinet Members in attendance:-

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

Officers in attendance

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
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 S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr P Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Mr N Elliott, Director of Adult Services
Ms A Richards, Temporary Service Director - 21st Century Schools and Transformation
Mr D Williams, Head of Attendance and Wellbeing Service
C Emery, Interim Head Of Community Safety and Community Housing
N Goodman, Lead For Strategic Planning and MIM

19 Apology for Absence

An apology for absence was received from the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan.

In the Leader's absence, the meeting was chaired by the Vice Chair/Deputy Leader.

20 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declarations of personal interest were made pertaining to the agenda:

- In respect of Agenda Item 10 – Family Engagement Officers Review, the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language declared 'I am on the Governing Body at YGG Abercynon, which is referenced within the report'; and
- In respect of Agenda Item 9 – Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE), the Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure declared 'The Leader has appointed me to sit on the SACRE Committee'.

21 Minutes

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 22nd June 2022 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

22 Council's Performance and Resources Report

The Service Director of Finance and Performance Services provided the Cabinet with an overview of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective, for the financial year ended 31st March 2022.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services was assured by the proactive approach taken to assure the Council's ongoing financial resilience, which had been aided by the additional funding made available by Welsh Government during the quarter. The Cabinet Member noted the three Corporate Plan priority position statements and the positive difference made to communities throughout various Council service areas.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure agreed that the report reinforced the excellent work undertaken by all departments within the Local Authority.

The Deputy Leader acknowledged the challenging events experienced by the Local Authority, such as the ongoing effects of the pandemic.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the on-going impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on service delivery and, in parallel, the re-introduction of services as Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted;

Revenue

2. To note and agree the General Fund revenue outturn position of the Council as at the 31st March 2022 (Section 2 of the Executive Summary) and note the incorporation of Welsh Government Covid-19 funding into this position to support on-going service delivery.

Capital

3. To note the capital outturn position of the Council as at the 31st March 2022 (Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary).
4. To note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 31st March 2022 (Section 3f of the Executive Summary).

Corporate Plan Priorities

5. To note the year end position regarding progress made against agreed Corporate Plan priorities (Sections 5 a – c of the Executive Summary).

6. To 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)

23 Risk Management Strategy

The Service Director of Finance and Improvement Services presented the report, which set out the Council's updated draft Risk Management Strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services commented that effective risk management arrangements are key to the Council's ability to deliver its services and the priorities set out within the Corporate Plan. The Cabinet Member noted that the report had been considered in depth by the Council's Governance and Audit Committee and was pleased to note its content.

The Deputy Leader commented that the report demonstrates the robustness of the Council's internal management and took the opportunity to thank internal audit and the Governance and Audit Committee for the contribution.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve the Council's updated draft Risk Management Strategy, as endorsed by the Governance and Audit Committee at its meeting on 23rd March 2022.

24 Draft Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022-26

The Head of Community Safety and Community Housing presented the draft Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022 – 2026 to Cabinet for consideration and approval.

The Cabinet Member for Public Health & Communities thanked the officer for the presentation and commented that the concerning statistics detailed within the report demonstrated the demand for supported housing schemes. The Cabinet Member shared the following example from the report: *'524 individuals, families and groups were placed in temporary accommodation in 2020/2021. 40% of the 524 were placed in temporary accommodation multiple times, leading to a total of 852 placements in 2020/2021.'*

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity congratulated officers on the innovative pilot scheme which had been set up to work with landlords and alleviate the housing lists. The Cabinet Member commented that there was a need for local housing allowance to rise to keep pace with the rise in the private rent sector and acknowledged that this was an issue to take up with Welsh Government.

The Deputy Leader spoke of her visits to shared housing provision and emphasised the importance of working with Local Members.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve the Rhondda Cynon Taf Housing Support Programme

- Strategy 2022 -2026 as set out at Appendix 1 of the report; and
2. To support the development of a comprehensive Delivery Plan and Investment Strategy to secure achievement of the Strategy priorities over the next 4 years and specifically to identify the financial requirements and funding opportunities to deliver the development of additional supported housing schemes, including a new scheme to replace the Mill Street Hostel, and to offer further shared housing provision throughout

25 Redevelopment Proposal: Former Bronllwyn Residential Care Home

The Director of Adult Services provided Cabinet with a redevelopment proposal to provide specialist care accommodation for people with learning disabilities at the former Bronllwyn Residential Care Home “Bronllwyn”, as part of the modernisation of the Council’s residential care home modernisation programme, which was previously agreed by Cabinet in December 2020 and to seek approval for the funding required to deliver the proposed redevelopment.

The Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care was pleased to note the significant investment into health and social care infrastructure and the Council’s residential care home modernisation programme for the older generation. The Cabinet Member noted that Bronllwyn was built in the 1970’s and was no longer fit for purpose for those who require specialist care.

The Cabinet Member endorsed the recommendation to submit a new funding application in July 2022 for the full redevelopment costs, currently estimated at £4.879m, to Welsh Government’s Integration and Rebalancing Care Fund (IRCF).

The Deputy Leader was pleased to note that alternative provision had been found for residents whilst Bronllwyn had been closed.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the information in the report;
2. To approve the redevelopment proposal for Bronllwyn to provide specialist care accommodation for people with learning disabilities as outlined in Section 5 of the report;
3. To continue the current care and support arrangements for the previous service users of Bronllwyn Day Centre until the new older people day centre facility at the Dan-y-Mynydd Extra Care Scheme in Porth opens in early 2024, and approves the permanent closure of the day centre at Bronllwyn to allow the redevelopment of the site, as set out in paragraph 5.13 of the report;
4. To approve the relocation of the Council’s Supported Living Team Office at Bronllwyn to Ty Elai;
5. To approve the funding package as outlined in Section 9 below, to redevelop Bronllwyn to provide specialist care accommodation for people with learning disabilities;
6. To include the redevelopment of Bronllwyn within the Council’s Capital Programme (Modernisation Programme (Adults)); and
7. To receive update reports on progress of the Bronllwyn redevelopment.

26 Residential Care Homes for Older People

The Director of Adult Services provided Cabinet with information regarding the current demand and capacity of the Council's residential care homes for older people and made recommendations to temporarily redesign current service provision leading to the temporary closure of the 24-bed Ystrad Fechan care home and the transfer of the eight residents to Pentre House or another home of their choosing which meets their needs; and to temporarily provide provision of up to 10 new step up step down beds at Parc Newydd, in partnership with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, to support hospital discharge.

The Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care noted that the demand for traditional residential care was decreasing and the demand for more complex care was increasing.

Referring to the proposal to temporarily provide provision of up to 10 new step up step down beds at Parc Newydd, the Cabinet Member was pleased to note that this was the first of its kind and would commented that it would, no doubt, improve patient flow through the system.

The Deputy Leader was in support of the recommendations contained within the report and emphasised that any future proposals following the temporary period would be based on a wide ranging consultation and explained that the Council's Scrutiny Committees would have the opportunity to consider any investment of service redesign options before a Cabinet decision is made.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the information in the report;
2. To redesign the Council's residential care home service to temporarily close Ystrad Fechan and transfer residents to Pentre House or another home of their choice which meets their needs;
3. To redesign the Council's residential care home service and temporarily provides up to 10 new step up step down beds at Parc Newydd, in partnership with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, to support hospital discharge; and
4. To receive a further report in Autumn 2022, setting out proposals to bring forward development proposals and options for the modernisation of, and investment in the Council's residential services.

27 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

The Director of Education presented the report, which sought Cabinet approval to commence public consultation of the contents of the 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) for the statutory period of 28 days prior to submitting to Welsh Government for formal approval.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language commented that assessment provided an up-to-date picture of the County Borough but noted that the responses were received during the pandemic. The Cabinet Member commented that there had been a reduction in registered settings and places with a particular decline in child-minding spaces across RCT due to lockdown restrictions.

In terms of demand and any gaps in provision, the Cabinet Member drew attention to North East Taff Ely and South Rhondda, which he felt should be

closely monitored.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure spoke of the provision of play and its importance.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report;
2. To commence consultation with relevant stakeholders on the contents of the 2022 CSA; and,
3. That following the consultation period, the CSA be submitted to Welsh Government for final approval.

28 Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

The Director of Education provided the Cabinet with information on the Council's statutory duties to establish a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE).

The Director sought to update Members on the constitution of Rhondda Cynon Taf SACRE and provided them with the Annual Report of the RCT SACRE for the academic year 2020-2021 is available.

The Deputy Leader and the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language took the opportunity to thank all those involved in the SACRE for their contributions and work undertaken.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the Annual Report 2020-2021.

29 Family Engagement Officers Review

The Head of the Attendance and Wellbeing Service provided Cabinet Members with information on the implementation of the Family Engagement Officer (FEO) pilot in RCT and outlined three options for furthering the work for Cabinet consideration.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language was pleased to consider the report and commented that supporting children and their families was a manifesto commitment of the administration. The Cabinet Member was of the view that the pilot had been a success in many schools and was in support of its expansion to further the work. The Cabinet Member felt that the additional funding and FEO's would improve attendance at schools and explore with children and families any potential barriers in terms of attendance.

In terms of the options put forward by officers, the Cabinet Member was in support of Option 3 and commented that it was based on need and a hybrid of the other two options outlined within the report.

The Deputy Leader commented that some children had found it difficult to return to a school setting, post pandemic, and that the additional support officers had helped greatly.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the positive impact of the pilot of Family Engagement Officer roles as contained in the report; and
2. To approve Option 3, to deploy the additional Welsh Government funding based on the highest identified need and to benefit pupils across all phases - primary, secondary and Pupil Referral Unit learners.

30 Sustainable Communities for Learning (Formerly 21st Century Schools): Mutual Investment Model - Next Projects

The Lead Officer for Strategic Planning and MIM provided Cabinet Members with an update on progress with the second batch of three primary schools proposed to be funded via the Mutual Investment Model (MIM) funding element of Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme. In addition, the Officer sought approval of Members to submit a New Project Request to the Welsh Education Partnership Company (WEPCo) requesting the production of a Stage 1 submission which will commence initial design work for proposed new primary school buildings for Maesybryn, Tonysguboriau and Glyn-coch via the MIM funding element of Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language was pleased to note the content of the report and commented that it continued the modernisation agenda and vision to have the very best facilities for the pupils within the County Borough.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. That a New Project Request be issued to WEPCo in relation to proposed new primary school buildings for Maesybryn, Tonysguboriau and Glyn-coch in accordance with the Strategic Partnering Agreement to which the Council is a party (per Cabinet Report dated the 24th of September 2020);
2. To note Cabinet's approval given at the meeting on the 22nd of June 2022 in relation to the statutory consultation on the proposed closure of Craig-Yr-Hesg/Cefn Primary Schools and the creation of a new primary school for Glyn-coch; and
3. To note that agreeing to issue New Project Requests to WEPCo does not commit the Council to enter into contractual arrangements in relation to any projects. Approval to progress further or enter into any Project Agreements for any MIM Projects will be brought back before Cabinet for determination.

31 UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund - Opportunities In South East Wales

The Director of Prosperity and Development provided Cabinet with 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. The Director sought to

highlight the investment opportunities for Rhondda Cynon Taf and the wider South East Wales region and provide detail of the proposed delivery arrangements and the timescales for the submission and appraisal of a South East Wales Regional Investment Plan.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity was pleased to note the content of the report and commented that £585M of new investment would be brought to Wales, with around half allocated to the South East region and 16% to RCT. The Cabinet Member also took the opportunity to congratulate officers on taking the lead for the Region.

The Deputy Leader spoke positive of the report and the Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To consider the detail of the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund for the period 2022 to 2025 and the potential investment opportunities for Rhondda Cynon Taf and the wider South East Wales region;
2. To the delivery arrangements for SPF in RCT and the wider Cardiff Capital Region and the requirement for a 3 year Regional Investment Plan to access the Fund as set out in Section 7 of the report; and
3. To endorse the Council's role as lead authority for South East Wales and the development and submission of a Regional Investment Plan to UK Government by 1 August 2022.

This meeting closed at 2.10 pm

**Cllr M Webber
Chair.**

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

6TH SEPTEMBER 2022

LOCAL COST OF LIVING SUPPORT – SUPPLEMENTARY (DISCRETIONARY) SCHEME

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (CLLR A MORGAN)

Author(s): MR BARRIE DAVIES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide details of a local Supplementary (Discretionary) Cost of Living Support Scheme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended to:

- a) Note and agree the detail of the proposed Local Cost of Living Support - Supplementary (Discretionary) Scheme;
- b) Note and agree the implementation arrangements and delegation to the Director of Finance and Digital Services as detailed at section 10.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide details of the proposed scheme as set out.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Welsh Government (WG) have previously announced a package of measures to help people with support towards the cost of living. The package included £152M to provide a £150 cost-of-living payment to eligible households (the main scheme) and £25M to provide discretionary support for other purposes related to living costs.
- 4.2 This Council determined its scheme and implementation arrangements on the 24th March 2022 and has subsequently made over 117,000 payments totalling £15.271M.

- 4.3 To further support residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf with the ongoing and escalating cost of living crisis, this report sets out a follow up supplementary (discretionary) scheme of support.
- 4.4 This is in addition to WG's Fuel Support Scheme which is due to be delivered by the Council during Autumn 2022.

5. **LOCAL COST OF LIVING SUPPORT – SUPPLEMENTARY (DISCRETIONARY) SCHEME**

- 5.1 The proposed local supplementary scheme is set out below.

a. Payment to Families with one Child or more of Compulsory School Age

- A payment of £75 will be available / made to families with one or more child(ren) of compulsory school age. It will be one payment per family, not per child.
- Families of electively home educated child(ren) will be eligible, as will families of child(ren) that attend a school outside of Rhondda Cynon Taf but reside within the County Borough.
- It is estimated that 22,000 families will be entitled to this £75 payment.
- The cost to the Council of this element of the local scheme amounts to **£1.650M**.

b. Support to Food Banks

- It is proposed that **£50k** is provided to support food banks and food support grants. This supplements the support which was provided in the initial discretionary scheme.

c. Support to Lower Paid Council Staff

- Council staff continue to provide valued public services. Our lowest paid employees however, are more likely to be suffering from the intense cost of living crisis.
- In recognition of this it is proposed that all employees who are remunerated at Grades 1 to 6 are paid a one-off support payment supplement to their salary.
- In scope roles would include litter pickers, refuse loaders, home care and social care workers, cooks, cleaners, school crossing patrols etc.
- This would equate to £125 per employee and would be made to 5,800 employees.
- The cost to the Council of this payment would amount to **£0.940M** (including on-costs).

d. Local Cost of Living Hardship Fund

- It is proposed that resources be set aside to create a Local Cost of Living Hardship Fund for those residents who demonstrate extreme financial hardship as a direct consequence of the cost of living crisis.

- Officers are requested to develop appropriate criteria for the Fund which will be discretionary in nature. Details of the criteria will be published on the Council's website.
- It is proposed that **£0.250M** be allocated into this Fund.

6. INDICATIVE SCHEME DELIVERY AND IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

6.1 The Local Cost of Living Support – Supplementary (Discretionary) Scheme will be operationally delivered during the period October to December 2022.

Payment to Families with one Child or more of Compulsory School Age

- Compulsory School Age will be determined as at the start of the school term beginning September 2022;
- A child begins to be of compulsory school age the term following their fifth birthday;
- In line with this, if a family has one or more children born between 1st September 2006 (i.e. age 16 as at 31st August 2023) and 31st August 2017 (i.e. age 5 as at 31st August 2022) and reside in Rhondda Cynon Taf, then they will be eligible for a Family Payment;
- The payment will not impact upon any benefits (e.g. Universal Credit);
- If a family has previously received a £50 family payment and continue to have a child(ren) of compulsory school age, then they will be automatically paid £75; and
- Families who have become eligible by virtue of having a child of compulsory school age from September 2022 will receive a letter with details of how to apply.

Payment to lower paid Council Employees

- A payment of £125 will be made at the October payroll;
- It includes all Council staff on Grades 1 to 6 who are due to receive a payment in October 2022; and
- The payment will be classed as earnings and accordingly will be subject to tax, National Insurance and pension deductions.

Local Cost of Living Hardship Fund

- It is anticipated that this fund will be available from October 2022.

6.2 Full details of the scheme and its implementation arrangements, including when payments are to be made will be available on the Council's website.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO ECONOMIC DUTY

7.1 Due regard has been given to the Council's public sector equality duties under the Equality Act 2010, namely the Public Sector Equality Duty and Socio-Economic Duty.

8. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no Welsh language implications as a result of the recommendations in this report.

9. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 9.1 There are no consultation requirements as a result of the recommendations in this report.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 10.1 The overall cost of the local supplementary scheme is £2.890M.
- 10.2 A balance of £0.9M of the Council's allocation from the WG main and discretionary scheme is available to be redirected to this supplementary scheme. This will be supplemented by £1.990M of one-off Council resources which have already been identified and set aside.
- 10.3 The detail of the scheme including eligibility, assessment and its administration is delegated to the Director of Finance and Digital Services in line with the Council's Constitution.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 11.1 The Director of Finance and Digital Services will administer the scheme and make the necessary determinations in accordance with the Council's 'officer scheme of delegation'.

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

- 12.1 The proposals are aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan "Making a Difference" 2020-2024, in particular the priority 'Prosperity – Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper' and also the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 well-being goal of "A more prosperous Wales".

13. CONCLUSION

- 13.1 This further support package will provide financial support to residents across Rhondda Cynon Taf. It will also provide a one-off supplementary payment to the lowest paid employees of the Council and provide further financial support to our foodbanks that continue to provide invaluable help to residents.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

6th SEPTEMBER 2022

COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN – INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & DIGITAL SERVICES IN CONSULTATION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, CLLR A MORGAN

AUTHOR: Barrie Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services (01443 424026)

1. **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This report sets out the position regarding the opportunity for Cabinet to propose to Council to further invest in the Council's priority areas, aligned to the Corporate Plan, "Making a Difference" 2020 – 2024.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet agree:

- 2.1 To review and if acceptable propose the additional investment and funding arrangements as set out in the report at Appendix A to Council at its meeting on 28th September 2022.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The importance of investment in areas supporting key Corporate Plan priorities has already been recognised by the Council with £144M of additional resources, over and above normal Capital Programme allocations, invested since October 2015.
- 3.2 The attached report proposes to continue to invest a further £2.725M in key priorities which can be funded by existing resources already set aside for investment in infrastructure.

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

- 4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of this report relate solely to the proposed report to Council at Appendix A.

5. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no Welsh language implications because the contents of the report relate solely to the proposed report to Council at Appendix A

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 There are no consultation requirements as a result of the recommendations in this report.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 All financial implications are included in the proposed report to Council at Appendix A.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

8.1 There are no legal implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

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

9.1 The proposed investment areas are in line with all the Corporate Plan priorities and the Council's five workstreams and contributes to all of the seven national wellbeing goals.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 The draft report at Appendix A sets out the proposed investment areas and funding arrangements.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022 – 2023

COUNCIL

28TH SEPTEMBER 2022

COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN – INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

REPORT OF THE CABINET

AUTHOR: Barrie Davies, Director of Finance and Digital Services (01443 424026)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report sets out the position regarding the opportunity for the Council to further invest in its priority areas, aligned to the Corporate Plan, “Making a Difference” 2020 – 2024.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council:

2.1.1 Review and if acceptable agree the additional investment and funding arrangements as set out in paragraph 4 which, if agreed, will be incorporated into the Council’s Capital Programme.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The importance of investment in areas supporting key Corporate Plan priorities has already been recognised by the Council with £144M of additional resources, over and above normal Capital Programme allocations, invested since October 2015.
- 3.2 A further opportunity for investment is now available for consideration.

4. ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT

- 4.1 In line with the Council’s Corporate Plan priorities, additional investment is now proposed across the following areas.

Investment Priority	£M
Highways & Roads	1.000
Unadopted Roads	0.100
Flood Alleviation Works	1.000
Environmental Improvements (bins and benches)	0.050
Parks	0.200
Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs)	0.200
Darran Park Sports Pitch	0.175
Total Investment	2.725

4.2 The Council's unaudited draft Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2022 show the Council has revenue stream earmarked reserves at the 31st March 2022 of £112.422M which are set aside for a variety of purposes. In addition, there are specific reserves relating to Capital Funding, Insurance and Treasury Management.

4.3 The Investment/Infrastructure reserve is a specific reserve to fund the cost of maintaining and enhancing infrastructure across the County Borough. The balance of this reserve at 31st March 2022 was £19.800M, therefore the proposed investment priorities shown at paragraph 4.1 can be fully funded from this reserve.

4.4 Further detail on the proposed additional investment is shown below.

a) Highways & Roads (£1.000M)

Funding will continue to support the enhanced investment in the Council's largest asset, building on sustained increases in annual funding for highways capital maintenance over recent years.

b) Unadopted Roads (£0.100M)

Building on the funding previously allocated, a further £0.100M is allocated to unadopted roads to enable more streets to be made up to adoptable standards and formally adopted as a Council maintained asset.

c) Flood Alleviation Works (£1.000M)

Funding will continue to support works on land drainage and flood alleviation schemes and will enable the Council to progress with project business cases targeted at attracting external Welsh Government funding with this additional £1.000M being available for match funding.

d) Environmental Improvements (£0.050M)

Funding will support improvements to include new bins and benches within parks and other open spaces.

e) Parks (£0.200M)

This additional funding will allow the ongoing investment programme into the refurbishment of sports pavilions, upgrading of sports pitches and the repairs

to parks infrastructure to be enhanced even further.

f) Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) (£0.200M)

Funding will support the development of new Multi Use Games Areas to include provision for football and basketball and general community use.

g) Darran Park Sports Pitch (£0.175M)

Additional Council resources will be made available alongside a funding application to upgrade the pitch at Darran Park (total cost £0.375M), which is nearing the end of its useful life, from a sand-filled astroturf pitch to 3G.

The above investments support the Corporate Plan priority of **Places**: where people are proud to live, work and play.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

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

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no Welsh language implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 There are no consultation requirements as a result of the recommendations set out in the report. Subject to the decision of Council, consultation will be undertaken on specific areas, as appropriate, as part of developing/implementing projects.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The financial implications of the recommendations are set out in the report. The proposed investment priorities are fully funded from Council resources already set aside for this purpose.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The recommendations have been compiled ensuring continued compliance with the Council's legal requirement to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs as set out in Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. In addition, the proposed investment areas support the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities, in line with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

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

10.1 The proposed investment areas are in line with the priorities included within the Council’s Corporate Plan and support the sustainable development principle of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, in particular, planning for the ‘long term’, helping to ‘prevent’ problems occurring or getting worse in the future and delivering services in ‘collaboration’ with others.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 This report has identified the opportunity to invest a further £2.725M of additional resources in our local area including our own assets in order to improve our infrastructure and the services which are available to our residents.

DRAFT

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

6th SEPTEMBER 2022

A REPORT PROPOSING THE INTRODUCTION OF A NEW SOLAR PANEL GRANT AND THE EXTENSION OF THE DOMESTIC HEATING GRANT

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

AUTHOR: DEREK JAMES, SERVICE DIRECTOR - PROSPERITY & DEVELOPMENT

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Members to:
- 1.2 Establish a new solar panel grant scheme for residents of RCT, which supports the Council's Affordable Warmth Strategy 2019 – 2023 and the RCT 2022-25 Plan [‘Think Climate RCT’ - Making Rhondda Cynon Taf Carbon Neutral by 2030](#).
- 1.3 Extend the current domestic heating grant scheme until 2025 for residents of RCT, in order to repair, replace or install a new heating system and energy efficiency measures in line with the Council's Affordable Warmth Strategy 2019 – 2023 and the RCT 2022-25 Plan [‘Think Climate RCT’ - Making Rhondda Cynon Taf Carbon Neutral by 2030](#).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 Members approve the creation of a new solar panel grant up until 2025.
- 2.2 Members note the positive impact that the domestic heating grant has had on residents of RCT and agree for the grant to be extended until 2025.

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To support the Council's commitment to mitigating the impacts of fuel poverty and enabling warmer homes by improving the energy efficiency of homes within the county borough and reducing carbon emissions.

- 3.2 To address the need for financial assistance for households that could be affected by fuel poverty, due to low income, who are not in receipt of means tested benefits, in order to replace inefficient/broken heating appliances or installation and/or install more energy efficient measures to a person's home.
- 3.3 To provide financial assistance for households to install solar panels to their home in order to make the home more energy efficient and reduce energy bills.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In Wales, a household is defined as being in fuel poverty if it spends more than 10% of its income to heat their home to a satisfactory comfort level.
- 4.2 However, this definition of fuel poverty does not capture families that 'under heat' their homes due to the inability to afford a comfortable heating standard. These families can be at greater risk of suffering further consequences of cold related illnesses from living in cold homes.
- 4.3 There are three main factors that contribute to fuel poverty:
1. Household income
 2. Energy prices
 3. The energy efficiency of homes
- 4.4 When faced with fuel poverty, households often react in the following ways:
- They use less energy than they need, potentially making existing health problems worse and making them more vulnerable to other cold related illnesses.
 - They try to meet their energy needs by rationing other essential items such as food (heat or eat).
 - They borrow money to pay their energy bills and/or fall into debt.
- 4.5 New fuel poverty figures released by Welsh Government highlight that 14% of households in Wales are estimated to be living in fuel poverty with a further 3% in severe fuel poverty. It has also been estimated that 11% of homes are at risk of living in fuel poverty (October 2021).
- 4.6 The increase in the domestic energy price cap announced by Ofgem on the 3rd February 2022 means that typical average dual fuel energy bills increased on the 1st April 2022 by almost **£700 a year, a 54% increase**. Taking the 2021 estimates of fuel poverty, and revising them using fuel prices, since the 1st April 2022, assuming all households are on the price cap, up to 45% of households could be in fuel poverty, a 31% increase, with a further 8% in severe fuel poverty. It has also been estimated that 15% of households could be at risk of falling into fuel poverty. Further increases in the energy price cap are now expected and based on data from various energy analysts, the average annual

energy bill could be as high as £3850 in January 2023 resulting in more people be at risk of falling into fuel poverty.

- 4.7 In October 2019, 'Warmer Homes: A Fuel Poverty Strategy' was approved by Cabinet. The strategy identifies three main objectives to help mitigate the effects of fuel poverty for Rhondda Cynon Taf residents. These are:
1. Provide advice and assistance to maximise household disposable income
 2. Reduce energy prices
 3. Improve the energy efficiency of homes and decarbonisation
- 4.8 The strategy sets out the Council's objectives and actions in order to have maximum impact for residents whilst also achieving value for money. One of the key actions set out in the strategy was to consider developing a heating grant to target households who are not eligible for other types of grant assistance, but may still be in fuel poverty i.e. no working heating systems.
- 4.9 Since the Strategy was approved, the Council has delivered a range of approaches and interventions to help mitigate the number of households living in fuel poverty. This includes promoting external grant assistance that is currently available through the Welsh Government's fuel poverty schemes such as 'NEST' which provides a range of fully funded energy efficiency measures and 'Arbed am Byth' which is a fully funded area based scheme to private homes regardless of income levels if properties have an EPC rating of E or lower. There is also the UK Government's Energy Company Obligation (ECO) efficiency programmes; the 'ECO4' programme was implemented in April 2022 and is currently being rolled out. ECO funding primarily targets the 'affordable warmth' group which are those in receipt of means tested benefits.
- 4.10 In 2021/2022 RCT residents received **527 energy efficiency measures from the NEST scheme**, a total of 518 (98%) of these were for boiler replacements/central heating systems.
- 4.11 In September 2021 an Arbed scheme was targeted in the Penrhiwceiber area due to its high levels of fuel poverty. The scheme ended in November 2021 **supporting 142 homes, delivering 570 energy measures**. Of the 142 homes, 68% of these had Solar PV installed. On average each home received £4.5k of energy measures, which resulted in an approximate £292 savings to the home owners energy bills per year.
- 4.12 However, the Covid-19 pandemic and the current cost of living crisis has further impacted on households through a reduction of incomes, increase in energy bills, increase in utility debts from people generally spending more time at home due to lockdowns, loss of employment and/or poor health.
- 4.13 The impact of this is significant. Not being able to afford heating bills could result in people under heating their homes. Living in cold homes has a detrimental impact on health and well-being generally, but in particular, spending extended periods exposed to the cold can exacerbate or induce respiratory and

cardiovascular conditions that increase the risk of contracting Covid-19, and its severity (Homes, Health and Covid 19: Centre for Ageing Better and the King's Fund Report - Sept 2020).

- 4.14 As such, the 2 grants proposed in section 5 of this report will provide vital assistance to households, supporting them to move out of fuel poverty and/or prevent them falling into fuel poverty. The grants will help households to heat their homes affordably and therefore improve their health and wellbeing.

5.0 GRANT PROPOSALS

EXTENDING THE CURRENT DOMESTIC HEATING GRANT SCHEME TO 2025

- 5.1 The current RCT heating grant is available to owner occupiers to help them either install first time central heating or upgrade existing heating systems. The Grant provides assistance for either boilers under 10 years old that are not working or condemned or to upgrade the efficiency of those over 10 years old or with a SEDBUK rating of less than 86% (SEDBUK is the Seasonal Efficiency of Domestic Boilers in the UK, which is an industry approved assessment of the energy efficiency of a boiler. It is identified in many national fuel poverty schemes that a rating of less than 86% is considered inefficient).
- 5.2 The grant provides funding of up to **£5,000**, with no contribution required, unless the costs exceed the grant maximum and the household wishes to 'top up' the costs themselves.
- 5.3 All options for external funding are sourced first before any award of internal grant funding. In cases where partial external funding may be sourced, (windfall opportunities or changes to external grant funding) the grant has contributed towards the shortfall up to the grant maximum.
- 5.4 Heating systems available under the grant include not just conventional A rated condensing boilers, but other low carbon or more sustainable heating options. This includes fuel sources of gas, electric, LPG, biomass, and oil but preference is given to those that offer the most energy efficiency and environmental improvements.
- 5.5 Heating options include;
- Boiler replacement or first time installation (wet and dry systems as required and suitable to the property)
 - Boiler repair
 - Radiators and pipework upgrades/ repair (where required)
 - System flush – magnacleaner (where required)
 - Minor insulation work
 - Electric heating options paired with solar panels i.e. Infrared heating systems (once measures approved for RdSAP ratings)

- Hybrid heating options
- 5.6 In order to measure the impact of the grant Pre and Post Energy Performance Certificates are completed.
- 5.7 The below sets out the grant criteria:
- Household Income under £30,576 after rent or mortgage costs. This sum is based on ONS average income levels for RCT, which was used for the ECO flex criteria. Therefore, the grant will assist those with below average income for RCT.
 - Owner Occupiers only.
 - Boiler not working or condemned if under 10 years old.
 - If boiler is working it must be either
 - over 10 years old or;
 - less than 86% efficiency (SEDBUK ratings) or;
 - a recommended measure on a valid Energy Performance Certificate.
 - Grant funding will not be eligible for households with more than £16,000 savings but they will instead be signposted towards Home Improvement Loans (This will be validated by households providing evidence of savings account statements following the same process as other grant applications).
 - External funding will be sourced and utilised, if available in the first instance with the proposed funding used to provide any shortfall funding up to the grant maximum.
 - Any additional costs of works above the grant maximum are to be met by the home owner but can be met by other assistance i.e. loans or other grant assistance if meets eligibility criteria.
- 5.8 Since the implementation of the heating grant the following outcomes have been achieved:
- 41 heating grant applications have been completed, with £135k of grant awarded to residents (approximately £3,300 per household).
 - Of the 41 grants, 64% of homes saw an uplift of at least one EPC band. With 14 (34%) of homes increasing to an EPC C rating.
 - The average SAP score increased by 13 points.

The outcomes above demonstrate the impact this grant is already having on making homes more energy efficient. It has also been estimated to have saved the resident approximately **£280 per year**.

THE NEW SOLAR PANEL GRANT SCHEME

- 5.9 Solar Photovoltaic (PV) panels harness the Sun's energy and converts this into electricity that can be used inside the home. Solar panels consist of cells made from a semi conducting material, which when exposed to light, becomes energized, producing (DC) electricity. This then travels through an inverter to create usable (AC) electricity for the home. The cells do not have to be exposed

to direct sunlight to produce power, however, the stronger the sunlight, the more electricity produced.

5.10 Solar panels have many advantages for households:

- **Save money on energy bills**

For example, based on an average property size in Penrhiwceiber, if a home was to have 3.5kWp solar panels installed, which would cost approximately £5k, the home owner could receive an annual saving of around **£464 a year** on their energy bills. This is calculated using the Energy Saving Trust Solar Panel Calculator 2022 and based on a home having a 35 degree, south facing roof, with the resident signing up to the Smart Export Guarantee at a rate of 4.1p/kWh. The Smart Export Guarantee allows you to sell back any excess energy generated directly to an energy supplier - 4.1p is the average sell back rate. Based on data from various energy analysts, the average annual energy bill could be as high as £3850 in January 2023. If adjusted to this rate, Solar PV could save the same home owner approximately **£701 a year on their energy bills**. The potential CO2 savings would also be significant at around 715kg/year.

- **Cash in on electricity that is not used**

The Smart Export Guarantee (SEG) requires licensed electricity suppliers to offer tariffs to small-scale, low-carbon generators, this would include homes with solar panels. Any solar-generated electricity that doesn't get used by the household is sent back to the National Grid, and the household receives money in return. A 3.5kWp system (with a 35 degree, south facing roof) could expect to earn the home owner an average of £80 annually (based on an average SEG rate of 4.1p/kWh).

- **Shrink the Carbon Footprint**

The primary reason solar panels are good for the environment is down to their carbon-busting technology. According to Eco Experts, the average residential solar PV system in the UK saves between 1.3 and 1.6 tonnes of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere each year.

- **Low maintenance**

Whilst the panels need to be kept clean and unobstructed, since they are smooth-surfaced and installed at an angle, the majority of dirt and debris will slide off. Regular rainfall also helps to keep things clean. The majority of solar panels come with a 25-year warranty and will be operational for upwards of 40 years.

5.11 To support our residents to take advantage of these benefits, it is proposed that the solar panel grant scheme will provide funding of up to 25% towards the purchase and installation of the solar panels, this will be capped at a maximum **£1,000 grant**. It is also important to note that homeowners having green

measures like solar panels, heat pumps, or insulation installed, will no longer have to pay VAT. This change came into effect in April 2022 and last for five years, until 2027.

5.12 As an example, if a resident was to install solar panels to their home at a value of £4,500 inclusive of VAT, the resident will now make an initial saving of £215 as they will not be required to pay the 5% VAT. This means the same array of solar panels would now cost £4,285.

5.13 Furthermore, against this cost of £4,285 an additional saving of £1,000 through the new solar panel grant scheme will be provided by the Council. This would leave the resident with a remaining balance of £3,285 to fund themselves, having received an overall saving of £1,215.

5.14 The proposed grant criteria includes:

- Owner Occupiers only.
- Any additional costs of works above the grant maximum are to be met by the home owner but can be met by other assistance i.e. loans or other grant assistance if they meet the eligibility criteria.
- The selected installer must be registered with the MCS or Flexi-Orb certification bodies.

5.15 In order to measure the impact of the grant, Pre and Post Energy Performance Certificates will be completed.

6.0 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. In summary, there are many positive impacts to groups that are covered in the equality impact assessment through the offer of both the domestic heating grant and the solar panel grant schemes. A more energy efficient home will help to safeguard residents from fuel poverty through helping residents live in safe and warm homes. Following the completion of the screening form, it was found that a full report is not required at this time.

7.0 CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

7.1 There are no formal consultation requirements arising from these proposals

8.0 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been prepared for the purpose of this report. In summary, there are many positive impacts to residents of RCT through offering a solar panel grant and heating grant schemes. The grants will be published on the Council's website and therefore information on the grants

and the online grant application process will be in both English and Welsh. This process will also allow RCTCBC staff to review applications through the Welsh language and use or improve their Welsh Language skills to approve applications and communicate with service users.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 The grant schemes have been included in the Council's Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan and will be fully funded from the fund with no match funding requirements. The investment plan was submitted to UK Government on 1st August, and it is anticipated that the plan will be approved in the autumn.
- 9.2 The total allocation over 3 years from 2022/23 to 2024/25 is £1.780M which will be managed as one budget to cover both grant schemes to allow flexibility to accommodate fluctuations in demand between the two schemes.
- 9.3 Subject to the recommendations being approved, preparations to launch the schemes will commence, however no grant awards will be made before the Shared Prosperity Fund is approved and the funding secured.
- 9.4 The schemes will be included in the Council's capital programme and reported to Cabinet as part of the Council's quarterly performance reports.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 The delivery of the grants will be provided from within the existing Capital Housing Grants Framework of contractors. Further advice will be sought from Procurement and Legal Services if required.

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

- 11.1 Investment in housing provides an ongoing stimulus to the local economy by encouraging spending and local supply chains. Reducing energy bills also creates more disposable income for residents that could be spent in local economies.
- 11.2 Maximising income helps improve prosperity of residents while also making them more resilient to future rises in energy bills/fuel poverty. Improving the energy efficiency of homes helps reduce the impact of climate change by reducing carbon emissions.
- 11.3 As such, both the solar panel grants and the heating grant will contribute to the delivery of the Council's Affordable Warmth Strategy 2019-2023 and contribute to the delivery of the Council's aims in the Net Zero Plan. It will also positively contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan priorities of People, Places and

Prosperity and contribute to all seven wellbeing goals in the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

12.0 STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

- 12.1 Successful implementation of the new solar panel grant scheme and the extension of the current domestic heating grant scheme are of strategic significance to Rhondda Cynon Taf.

13.0 CONCLUSION

- 13.1 This report proposes to establish a new solar panel grant scheme for residents of RCT and extend the current domestic heating grant scheme until 2025.
- 13.2 The grants will provide vital assistance to households, supporting them to move out of fuel poverty and/or prevent them falling into fuel poverty. They will also help households to heat their homes affordably, improving their health and wellbeing and reduce carbon emissions.

Other Information: -

Contact Office: Derek James Tel: (01443) 281115

This page is intentionally left blank



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

6th SEPTEMBER 2022

ULTRA LOW EMISSIONS VEHICLES (ULEV) TRANSITION PLAN

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – FRONTLINE SERVICES, IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, CLLR A MORGAN

Author: Roger Waters, Director – Frontline Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to outline the Council's plan to transition from an Internal Combustion Engine, (ICE), fleet to an Ultra-low Emissions Vehicles, (ULEV), fleet over the next 6 years.
- 1.2 The scope, and primary focus of this report, relates to the Council's Light Goods Vehicle, (LGV), Fleet.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the content of the report and duly to resolve to support:
 1. The procurement, either via lease-hire or outright purchase, of electric LGVs to replace existing ICE vehicles in accordance with the indicative timeline below in a phased approach.
 2. The development and installation of associated Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure, (EVCI), to enable the successful delivery and implementation of the ULEV transition plan.
 3. Trials of alternatively-fuelled vehicles, such as Hydrogen and Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil, (HVO), when and where available. (One such HVO trial is presently underway with respect to a selection of vehicles from the Council's Heavy Goods Vehicle, (HGV), fleet, with developments being closely monitored for signs of reductions in carbon emissions, which could potentially be used to inform future green fleet initiatives).

- 2.2 It is further recommended that Officers continue to pursue any and all opportunities to secure grants to assist with funding, either in part or in full, of any aspect of ULEV procurement or EVCI development.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council's Climate Change Strategy, ***Tackling Climate Change in Rhondda Cynon Taf (2021- 2025)*** sets out the Council's commitments to reduce carbon within the Council, including: *procuring a vehicle fleet that is fit for purpose, yet has a limited impact on the environment and replacing all our new cars and light goods vehicles with ultra-low emission vehicles by 2025*. The ever-improving capabilities of ULEVs means that these vehicles will only become more attractive operationally, and financially, and will reduce the level of carbon created by the Council as time progresses.
- 3.2 Additionally, the Council's ***Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy 2021-2030***, has stated ambitions of: *identifying suitable locations for 'Workplace Charging' across all RCT sites and work with other sectors, where applicable, to increase workplace charging, to meet demand as appropriate and transforming our fleet towards more sustainable methods of transportation, in a planned and practical way*. A key enabler for the transition to ULEVs is the provision of suitable charging infrastructure, primarily based at depot locations.
- 3.3 Further, the UK Government has stipulated that there will be a ban on the sale of all new diesel and petrol-fuelled LGVs from 2030. Hybrid vehicles will continue to be able to be sold until 2035, but from that date, the sale of such vehicles will also end with all new LGVs sold in the UK from 2035 being zero emissions vehicles.
- 3.4 At the current time, Hydrogen is viewed by the industry as a more realistic option for future HGV transition to ULEVs, but the Council are presently undertaking a trial using HVO as a replacement for diesel across a range of fleet vehicles, with results of the trial study expected back at the end of the summer.
- 3.5 There are a variety of grants and grant funding schemes available from the Welsh Government, (WG), and Office of Zero Emissions Vehicles, (OZEV), which the Council is actively looking to utilise to bid for monies to put towards the cost of replacement ULEVs and EVCI. **NB. It should be noted that such grants come with constraints such as only being for the cost difference between the new purchase price of a conventionally-fuelled vehicle and that of its ultra-low emissions equivalent, as well as not being applicable for the purchase of hybrid vehicles either.*
- 3.6 Moreover, via the Cardiff Capital Region, (CCR) partnership, there are over 70 publicly available Electric Vehicle Charging Points, (EVCPs), being installed across the County Borough at the present time, with OZEV funding for additional EVCPs at further sites on the cusp of being awarded.

4. BACKGROUND AND THE PROCESS OF VEHICLE REPLACEMENT

- 4.1 The range of Council services delivered is diverse in nature and complexity: from maintaining the public realm and green spaces, collecting recycling and refuse, delivering meals on wheels, educating our young people and caring for those that require support to remain independent. The terrain of the county borough is equally diverse.
- 4.2 Services are delivered within the community and from a significant number of locations, ranging from offices, depots and frontline buildings. Many of the services that are delivered use a Council vehicle.
- 4.3 The Council's fleet consists of 481 vehicles, with a well-established fleet replacement plan in place. Depending on the nature of the vehicle(s), replacements will either be in the form of new acquisitions following tender processes, (HGVs), or where relevant spot hires can be used in order to ensure the Council is well placed to take advantage of an electric fleet when appropriate, (LGVs), (i.e. vehicles can be off-hired and replaced with electric alternatives).

5. CURRENT FLEET PROFILE

- 5.1 The Council's fleet currently comprises of:
- 148 HGVs, (including large sweepers, refuse collection vehicles, Highway's lorries, gully vehicles and tractors).
 - 333 LGVs, (including cars, small / medium vans, small / medium tippers and 4x4s); these will be the focus of this report.
- 5.2 The Council's fleet is a mix of owned vehicles and leased vehicles, with all the HGVs being owned and the vast majority of LGVs being leased. The majority of the fleet are either petrol or diesel-fuelled and we currently have 10 Electric Vehicles, (EVs).

6. THE MOVE TOWARD ULTRA LOW EMISSIONS VEHICLES

- 6.1 A recent report from the Carbon Trust identified the Council's fleet as contributing 7% of the Council's baseline carbon footprint.
- 6.2 The speed of change was also identified as important in a recent report from the Welsh Government Energy Service, (WGES). Taking no action would result in 67,200 tonnes of Greenhouse Gases, (GHG), being emitted per year versus a period of steady change producing around half of this figure at 33,615 tonnes GHG by 2030.

- 6.3 It is also worth noting that a balance has to be struck between the pace of change and the requirement to maintain high operational standards, (e.g., if change is brought in at too fast a pace, it would likely lead to operational problems, so the transition toward a ULEV fleet needs to be phased, (whilst nonetheless retaining an ambitious target).
- 6.4 With regards to the Council's LGV fleet of 333 vehicles in total, these are broken down as follows:

Figure 1	
Vehicle Type	Total
4x4s	30
Cars	29
Light Vans	153
Medium Vans	50
Tippers	71
Grand Total	333

- 6.5 However, at this stage, 4x4s are considered to not be in scope for this transition plan to the lack of suitable ULEV equivalent vehicles.
- 6.6 In addition, 10 of the current LGV fleet are Electric and so these will also not form part of the transition plan. Therefore, in light of these caveats, this transition plan sets out a phased transition from a total of 293 ICE vehicles to ULEVs:

Figure 2	
Vehicle Type	Total
Cars	25
Light Vans	147
Medium Vans	50
Tippers	71
Grand Total	293

- 6.7 The proposed ULEV transition timeline is outlined below in Figure 3:

Figure 3	
Timeline	No. of Vehicles
YEAR 1 (2022/23)	121
Cars	14
Light Vans	78
Medium Vans	29
YEAR 2 (23/24)	60
Cars	4
Light Vans	45
Medium Vans	11
YEAR 3 (24/25)	35
Cars	7
Light Vans	22

Medium Vans	6
YEAR 4 (25/26)	73
Light Vans	2
Tipplers	71
YEAR 5 (26/27)	3
Medium Vans	3
YEAR 6 (27/28)	1
Medium Vans	1
Grand Total	293

7. STRATEGY AND APPROACH

- 7.1 The transition plan is initially based upon a lease model. This is because the Council is keen to learn from the experience of operating an electric fleet in what is still a fledgling market for ULEV technology.
- 7.2 Notwithstanding any of the above, this approach will be subject to ongoing review, so should not be regarded as inflexible. Indeed, should factors such as further technological innovations, feedback from other Local Authorities, an increase in proliferation of EVCI, changes to grant conditions present themselves and so forth, then the Council will adapt its strategy accordingly.
- 7.3 Nevertheless, whilst ULEV technology continues to evolve at a fast pace, there are still significant concerns around battery longevity in particular. The Council's current fleet is on a renewal cycle of 5 years, yet the estimated "payback" for ULEV equivalents is estimated to be nearer 9 years, (albeit this figure may be offset with grant support).
- 7.4 Consequently, to help de-risk the transition and mitigate the chance of battery failure outside of warranty, whilst at the same time allowing the opportunity to gather more operational information and reliability data as technology improves, it is proposed to predominately lease new ULEVs for a period of 3 years, rather than purchase them outright.
- 7.5 Furthermore, and with respect to grant support although the WG do offer some support to fund the purchase of new ULEVs, funding is usually only for the cost difference between conventionally-fuelled models and their ultra-low emission equivalents, which are currently around 50%-60% more expensive to purchase).
- 7.6 However, whilst such funding offers will continue to be considered accordingly, the Council proposes writing to the WG requesting consideration to amend their grant funding strategy, making it more flexible and attractive for Local Authorities by making grant monies available for a lease model too, (noting that it currently costs, on average, around 40% more to lease an EV compared to a diesel vehicle).

- 7.7 In phasing the transition from ICE vehicles to ULEVs, the Council will be able to maximise the potential of the existing fleet, whilst allowing for the planning, development and installation of EVCI, which will be crucial to the success of the transition.
- 7.8 Carbon reduction subgroups are liaising with external consultants to look at our power usage and what, in terms of Kilowatt Hours, (Kwh), the Council would need to generate at depots to fulfil our fleet transition needs, (with one such consultant currently developing a Ty Glantaf specific infrastructure model).
- 7.9 To complement the transition plan, the Council will continue to trial alternative fuels, such as HVO, as well as exploring technological innovations that improve vehicle engine efficiency, burn cleaner fuel and thus reduce harmful tailpipe emissions.
- 7.10 As a future commitment, and as part of an holistic approach to transitioning the Council's fleet, the Council will also investigate ways of reducing the carbon footprint of the so-called "grey fleet", (i.e. those vehicles owned and driven by staff for business purposes). Consideration will also be given to reducing the carbon footprint for staff journeys to and from the workplace.
- 7.11 The Council will continue to review the make-up of the Fleet as a whole, with a view to reducing its size when practicable to do so. In addition, as each vehicle comes up for renewal, the need for that vehicle will be vigorously challenged with the service area involved.

8. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 8.1 An Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment has been completed for the Council's aforementioned Climate Change Strategy. That Assessment directly relates to this report and reflects the wide range of subjects contained within the Strategy, as it is described as a "framework" for the more detailed work that will be developed in lower level plans, such as this ULEV Transition Plan, which will contribute to the delivery of the Council's Carbon reduction ambitions.
- 8.2 Under the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010, Local Authorities are required to have due regard to the need to:
1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination.
 2. Advance equality of opportunity.
 3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 8.3 The Council is committed to meeting the requirements of the Equality Act and in doing so contributing to the national Well-being goal of a

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

9. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no Welsh language implications as a result of the recommendations in this report.

10. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 10.1 The Fleet Services section will continue to liaise with all departments regarding the replacement / transition of assigned fleet vehicles.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 11.1 Moving forward, the agreed programme of work to transition the Council's LGV Fleet from an ICE fleet to a ULEV one, will be incorporated into Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements to ensure resource requirements are reviewed, challenged and planned for.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 12.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

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

- 13.1 The Council has committed to becoming a Carbon Neutral organisation by 2030 and to work with residents and businesses to ensure the whole County Borough is Carbon Neutral as close as possible to the 2030 target. This supports the priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference' – 2020-24.

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

14. CONCLUSION

- 14.1 Procuring new or replacement LGV fleet vehicles should be undertaken in line with this ULEV Transition Plan together with the embedded fleet replacement programme. This is vital if the Council are to meet its stated carbon reduction targets.

- 14.2 It is anticipated that the timelines mentioned in this report, which represent a phased approach to the fleet transition, whilst challenging, can be achieved as long as technology and infrastructure allows. Fleet Services will continually liaise with all sections and departments to trial new technologies and infrastructure to ensure that they are operationally fit for purpose.
- 14.3 It is clear that a lack of EVCI is one of the main obstacles to progressing the ULEV fleet as a whole and so it is key that solutions to this problem are found quickly. To help achieve this, cross-cutting work between the Council's Carbon Reduction & Energy team and Fleet Services, in consultation with all departments that utilise the Council's LGV fleet, is ongoing to agree the preferred locations for the installation of such essential infrastructure.
- 14.4 A phased approach will give the Council options and flexibility going forward to help ensure its Carbon Footprint is lowered and zero emissions targets are met in with wider strategies and local plans.



Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity

Contact Officer

This page is intentionally left blank