



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,
2 Llys Cadwyn,
Taff Street,
Pontypridd,
CF37 4TH

Meeting Contact: Sarah Handy - Members' Researcher & Scrutiny Officer (07385 401942)

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a Virtual meeting of **CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held on **THURSDAY, 1ST FEBRUARY, 2024 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 Tuesday, 30 January 2024 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

AGENDA

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1. SCRUTINY RESEARCH

A scrutiny research facility is available within the Council Business Unit to support Members' scrutiny responsibilities and their roles as Elected Members. Such research strengthens Scrutiny Committee work programmes to ensure outcome-based topics are identified. For any scrutiny research requirements please contact scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk

2. 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.

REPORTS OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS

3. CONSULTATIONS

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

4. THINK CLIMATE RCT' THE COUNCIL'S TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2022-2025

To receive the Council's bi-annual performance report in respect of its delivery of the Climate Change Strategy.

5 - 14

OFFICER REPORTS

5. EV CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE WITHIN COUNCIL ASSETS

To update Members on progress made in the field of Electric Vehicle Charging, within Council Assets.

15 - 20

6. THE WELSH GOVERNMENT 20MPH SPEED LIMIT ROLL OUT

For Committee Members to scrutinise the first 6 months of the Welsh Government's legislation to reduce the speed limit from 30mph to 20mph and its practical implications in RCT.

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7. HIGHWAYS INVESTMENT SCHEME

For Committee Members to receive an update in respect of the Highways Investment Scheme.

35 - 44

8. SHARED PROSPERITY FUND AND LEVELLING UP FUND ANNUAL REPORT

Scrutiny will receive an update on the delivery of the RCT local investment.

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9. 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.

10. CHAIRS REVIEW & 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 G Holmes, Councillor W Hughes,
Councillor G Jones, Councillor A O Rogers, Councillor W Treeby, Councillor R Yeo,
Councillor P Evans and Councillor G O Jones

Officers:

Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development

Christian Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Stephen Williams, Director for Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES and PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1 February 2024

THE COUNCIL'S TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2022-2025

'THINK CLIMATE RCT'

QUARTER 2 UPDATE

REPORT OF THE

SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Scrutiny Committee with a second quarter position statement as part of an overview of our progress in delivering the Council's Climate Change Strategy, '[Think Climate RCT](#)', agreed in June 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members.

- 2.1 Consider the information contained within the report.
- 2.2 Take a view on the potential areas for further consideration as part of the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme.
- 2.3 Notes the work to progress and further embed the Council's response to Climate Change into the business of the Council as part of the development of the Council's new Corporate Plan.
- 2.4 Consider whether Members wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters contained in the report in line with the Terms of Reference of the Committee.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To assist the Council to meet its 2030 Carbon Neutral targets.

- for RCT to be a carbon neutral Council,
- for the whole County Borough to be as close as possible to carbon neutral and
- to contribute to the Welsh Government's ambition of a Net Zero public sector.

- 3.2 To support the implementation and delivery of the Council's wider Tackling Climate Change Strategy ['Think Climate RCT'](#) and associated strategies/plans.

4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In recent years there have been growing global, UK wide and national drives to reduce carbon emissions, keep global warming below 1.5°, protect nature and the environment and adapt to the current and projected changes in the climate and more frequent extreme weather events.
- 4.2 In 2019, Welsh Government declared a Climate Emergency and set out its approach in its strategy [Prosperity for All: A low Carbon Wales](#). Since then, the Welsh Government has put in place many and varied plans, strategies, targets, milestones, ambitions and deadlines for public bodies to meet. The latest UK Climate Change Committee's ['Progress Report on Reducing emissions in Wales'](#), published in June, indicated that *'while the First Carbon Budget (2016-2020) has been achieved, Wales is not yet on track to meet its targets for the second half of this decade and beyond'*. The report set out 58 recommendations across a number of areas, which are currently under consideration by the Minister.
- 4.3 More locally, whilst the Council had progressed energy saving and other carbon reduction projects, it also recognised the speed, complexity, interconnections and differing geographic and sectoral boundaries surrounding the response to tackling climate change across all the services we provide, purchase or commission.
- 4.4 In June 2022, following engagement with residents, staff and other stakeholders given the Covid restrictions in place at the time, Cabinet agreed the Council's Tackling Climate Change Strategy: ['Think Climate RCT'](#). 'Think Climate RCT' currently provides a structure and framework for our plans to decarbonise the Council and the County Borough. Also, by mirroring the Council's current Corporate Plan in its commitments in respect of Think Climate People: Think Climate Places and Think Climate Prosperity the Council started to embed carbon reduction into the business of the Council.
- 4.5 Since June 2022, there have been numerous reports of progress of projects presented to Cabinet, the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee and to Scrutiny Committees. A high level summary of progress has been included as a standing item in the quarterly Performance Reports considered by Cabinet, Quarter 4 update can be seen at [Section 7](#) for illustrative purposes.
- 4.6 By mirroring the priorities in the Council's current Corporate Plan i.e. Think Climate People: Think Climate Places and Think Climate Prosperity, the Council has started to embed the Climate Change Strategy and carbon reduction into the business of the Council. This work to embed our response to the impact of changes in climate is continuing through the development of the new Corporate Plan. The new plan will be in place from April 2024, and is currently the subject of wide-ranging engagement.
- 4.7 This report provides an overview of progress against ['Think Climate RCT'](#) during Quarter 2, with the opportunity to view the detailed plans across each of the Climate priorities. The ongoing work programme to deliver the Climate Change Strategy in 2023/24 will continue to be embedded within the action planning and reporting for the Council's priorities. Further specific reports, as deemed appropriate, will also continue to be reported to Cabinet, the

Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee and Scrutiny Committees, in accordance with the agreed work programmes.

5 CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 This update considers four areas of focus within the Climate Change Strategy, acknowledging that there are also projects which overlap or do not have a clear 'home'. Where this is the case, the items are included in the areas of 'best fit'.
- 5.2 In Quarter 1, the format of the update was well received by the [Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee](#) at its meeting on 27 September. However, the Sub Committee requested further information in respect of the Procurement element of the Carbon Footprint be included. This has been developed in this Quarter 2 summary for Members' consideration in advance of further and more detailed information reports in respect of procurement issues. The Procurement Service is also developing a detailed information/training session for elected Members to support their skills and knowledge in this area.
- 5.3 In considering the Quarter 1 update in [October 2023](#), this Committee was advised that Climate Change is being included in the Member development programme. Part of this approach to further assist Members' understanding of Climate Change, is the Council's recently introduced e learning resource 'Think Climate RCT'. This e learning, available through RCT Source, was initially notified to elected Members through the Members' Newsletter for 20-24 November.

CLIMATE CHANGE – contributing to our Carbon Reduction Targets

Summary of progress to 30 September 2023

COUNCIL SPECIFIC

Our Carbon Footprint

We submitted the calculation of the Council's 2022/23 Carbon Footprint to Welsh Government in September 2023. The Footprint was calculated in accordance with Welsh Government's national carbon reporting requirements. Whilst it appears there has been a reduction in our [reported](#) carbon emissions of 120,907.4 tonnes CO₂ since 2021/22, any reduction cannot be confirmed until the data is ratified by Welsh Government.

Energy Efficiency and renewable energy

The Council continues to implement its Carbon Reduction Programme, including 7 completed roof top Solar PV installations, and a further 7 installations currently out to tender. We are also progressing the inventory of Council Buildings that will inform programming of further Solar PV installations on suitable buildings. The new process to identify projects for the Carbon Reduction Programme through a review of energy audits and Display Energy Certificate data is strengthening the evidence base to target and prioritise carbon reduction opportunities across the Council's buildings. The [School Eco Awards](#) launched on 6 October also embeds energy/carbon reduction into the award criteria. In addition to the Carbon Reduction Programme, we continue to seek opportunities to fund decarbonisation projects and have sought grant funding of up to £960K since 2022/23. As at mid-October 2023, £947K of grant funding has been awarded.

Fleet

Progress in implementing a plan to transition our fleet to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles agreed by [Cabinet in September 2022](#) has slowed, given its dependence on availability of vehicles and

CLIMATE CHANGE – contributing to our Carbon Reduction Targets

lack of grant funding. However, we are currently working collaboratively with Welsh Government and, currently, seven other Councils across Wales to maximise our procurement and spending power for a joint purchase of electric vehicles so that we can collectively benefit as part of a high-volume order, competing more effectively with demand e.g. from private sector couriers. Further detail will be available in Q3. We are also preparing to implement a new phase of the Fleet Maximisation Project to continue to ensure that services have access to vehicles that best meet their needs, as these needs change. This will allow us to monitor underutilised vehicles and make financial and carbon reduction savings where needed. To further reduce private car mileage travelled by staff, 15 pool vehicles for business travel will be made more widely available from Ty Elai (4), Sardis (3) and Ty Glantaf (8). The Pool cars will be booked through a bespoke in house online booking system, currently being tested. To date 2 of the vehicles are currently EV, as the usage grows through the online booking portal, we will monitor daily mileage and hope to roll out more EVs in the pool car network.

Council Buildings, including schools

- Information about our School Investment Projects, including Net Zero Carbon Primary School for Glyncoch, can be found [here](#).
- Delivered a summer maintenance programme that includes boiler replacements and LED lighting upgrades.
- Treorchy Comprehensive School and Ysgol Garth Olwg have been selected to receive Net Zero reports as part of a Welsh Government funded project to provide Net Zero reports for schools across Wales. The Project will be delivered by AECOM.
- Continuing to deliver the Office Accommodation Strategy 'Fit for the Future' and the Council's Operating Model and Working Arrangements Policy approved by [Cabinet in May 2023](#) locating Council buildings/services in buildings closer to the people that use, work and visit them and/or are accessible by public transport including the move of the Council Headquarters from the Pavilions, Clydach Vale to Llys Cadwyn, Pontypridd.

Procurement of Goods and Services

Based on the 2021/22 Carbon Footprint calculation, 67.55% of the Council's Carbon Footprint can be attributed to Procured Goods and Services. Of these goods and services, the four highest carbon emitting categories are Construction; Social Care Services; Transportation, Buses, Minibuses and Taxi Services and Fleet Services. The total carbon emission calculated from these categories amounts to 86% of the procured goods and services. As a result, these areas are being prioritised for carbon reduction support.

More widely, all opportunities for business to tender for Council contracts feature standard questions about carbon reduction, including a company's knowledge of its own carbon footprint, ability to calculate and/or reduce its footprint and ideas to further reduce carbon if its tender was successful. Also in its [Policy Note WPPN06/21](#), Welsh Government recommended that companies tendering for a authority contract in excess of £5M, must evidence their own company's plans to reduce carbon through its own [Carbon Reduction Plan](#).

For those companies already supplying goods and services, the Council has developed and tested a Carbon Calculator which companies can use to calculate their carbon emissions. Anecdotal feedback from suppliers that have tested the Calculator to date has been positive. So far as we know, the Carbon Calculator is a unique product as a result has attracted interest from the Welsh Local Government Association, Business Wales and Welsh Government. The Carbon Calculator is scheduled for publication/launch as part of a new Procurement Website during Quarter 3.

CLIMATE CHANGE – contributing to our Carbon Reduction Targets

Staff Awareness

We continue to raise staff awareness. In the last quarter we have continued to raise our Carbon reduction commitments in staff induction training, management briefings and across the performance management and governance processes. The e-learning module was available for 'soft launch' in September, with wider distribution in Q3.

ACROSS THE COUNTY BOROUGH

Think Climate PEOPLE

1. Put in place campaigns to support and encourage lifestyle choices and highlighted the Council's work across a range of services and projects including the ongoing campaign for [the roll out of the new recycling arrangements](#) to support the changes introduced in July 2023 with a new '[find your collection day](#)' facility, raising awareness of [engagement events about the Coed Ely Solar Farm](#), the announcement of new allotment sites in Ynysybwl and a range of national climate and environmental campaigns.
2. Promoted eight national/local campaigns including '[Plastic Free July](#)', '[Allotments Week](#)' in August and '[Second Hand September](#)' to residents and staff.
3. Held face to face engagement with residents in Town Centres, libraries and network events as part of ongoing Climate Conversation.
4. Raised awareness of the launch of [the RCT Eco Schools award](#) on 6 October 2023.
5. Officially opened 'Canolfan Calon Taf' at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park on 6 August as part of the Park's centenary celebrations at the 'Big Bite' event. The centre aims to engage people in their local environment, contribute to activities with positive climate impact and increase expertise and a love of nature.
6. Continued to promote and support sustainable local food with a focus on food pantries and working with Bryncynon Strategy project that will increase the coordination and availability of food and the buying power of the consortium.
7. Submitted the Council's bid for 'Sustainable Food Places' Bronze Award in September. Decision will be communicated to the Council in November 2023.
8. Provided support to residents in two energy advice 'roadshows' with Trivallis Housing Association.
9. Continued to work with third sector and community partners to maximise our resources and showcase areas of expertise and numerous environmental volunteering opportunities across the County Borough.
10. The '[Think Climate RCT](#)' webpage continues to be refreshed to ensure it remains up to date, fit for purpose and aligns to the newly released Welsh Government campaign through [Climate Action Wales](#).

Think Climate PLACES

1. The land based Solar Farm in Coed Ely was subject to local consultation between [11 July and 8 August](#). The project is now in final planning stage and if agreed, work will start during 2024.
2. Feasibility studies have been completed for Dare Valley and Treforest Weir hydro schemes, with results due to be received in Q3.
3. Received a favourable feasibility report for a Geothermal Project in the former Lewis Merthyr Colliery. Environmental studies now underway in advance of seeking planning approval.

CLIMATE CHANGE – contributing to our Carbon Reduction Targets

4. [Announced the development of new allotment](#) site in [Ynysybwll](#) following the securing of Welsh Govt funding. There will be 14 full size plots within the site which is scheduled for completion in March 2024 ready for new growing season.
5. The Amgen 1.5 MW single wind turbine was operational from 15 September. The first five weeks were used as a test period. It is anticipated that the turbine will generate 3,300 MW hours per annum, dependent on wind conditions.
6. Work to procure a 200KW Solar PV development to decarbonise energy consumption at the waste water treatment plant in Bryn Pica has slowed following refusal of a network connection by National Grid. Officers are currently considering options.
7. Worked with [T & C Recycling](#) to legally recycle/reuse seized/forfeited clothing including T shirts, trainers, jumpers, hoodies and tracksuits. Goods went to homeless shelters and homeless people on the streets following rebranding or shredded for disposal as rags.
8. Continued to use grant funding streams to increase the number of EV charging points in place on Council owned public car parks/public, community centre and leisure/education sites. Further information can be found on the Council's [EV Charging Strategy](#) and [EV Charging Web page](#).
9. Started the upgrade [work on the Rhondda Fach Active Travel route at Maerdy/Ferndale](#) and continued to develop Active Travel routes for Treorchy/Treherbert and Cwmbach as part of the Cynon Trail.
10. Obtained WG funding for 2023/25 to create an additional 30 'Nature on your Doorstep' sites on Council owned land, supporting the Living Landscape Project. This was accompanied by additional funding for two Biodiversity Officer posts until at least, March 2025. Suitable sites are currently being considered, Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee [27 September](#) refers.

Think Climate PROSPERITY

The Council continues to support people in poverty, which in turn also reduces carbon emissions and making existing homes more energy efficient. We are continuing to develop our new Affordable Warmth Strategy. In the meantime, we continued to deliver strategic schemes including making information available about the Welsh Government's Warm Home '[Nest](#)' scheme and prepared for implementation of ECO 4 Flex Scheme, following the [Delegated Decision](#) on 8 September. We are awaiting the outcome of a joint funding bid by 'Trustmark' and Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB for the Phase 2 Innovation Project. If agreed, this project will support joint targeting of households eligible for ECO 4 or other 'Heat and Save' interventions for residents affected by living in cold related homes. However, we continue to work with CTMUHB to establish referral pathways in the event that the bid is unsuccessful. This quarter

- 37 new Heating Grant applications were received.
- 21 Heating Grants were completed, £73k grants awarded.
- 10 referrals were made to the Housing Energy Officer, for advice on energy saving measures or assistance that could help them with their bills.
- 35 Solar Panel Grant applications were received.
- 34 Solar Panel Grants were completed, £37k grants awarded.

We also:

1. [Amended the timetable](#) for the development and adoption of the Council's Local Development Plan to take account of new/proposed changes in respect of Welsh Government policy/arrangements for biodiversity, flood risk, town centres and roads review.

CLIMATE CHANGE – contributing to our Carbon Reduction Targets

2. [Launched the new RCT eco School Awards](#) in Pontypridd High School on 6 October featuring categories for biodiversity and nature, energy and carbon saving and waste and recycling.
3. Progressed our plans to develop a Sustainable Toolkit for tourism business owners and continued to work with the Valleys Regional Park on current plans to promote sustainable tourism and strengthen recycling arrangements.
4. Worked with Business Improvement Districts, providing information/updates that they can use to access relevant support information in respect of sustainability.
5. Finalised preparations for the launch in Q3, of the Carbon Calculator that suppliers can use to identify and reduce their carbon footprints.

The associated action plan can be viewed [here](#)

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

There are no equality and diversity or socio-economic duty implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

7 CONSULTATION/ENGAGEMENT/INVOLVEMENT

There are no specific consultation implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

There are no stand-alone financial implications resulting from the recommendations set out in the report.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

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

- 10.1 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 and aligns directly to the priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference' – 2020-24.
- 10.2 This report reflects the Sustainable Development principle of the Well-being of Future Generations Act by improving all aspects of Well-being through 'Think Climate RCT'; taking steps to make sure that decisions we take today do not affect future generations from making the decisions they need in the future and contributing to the seven national Well-being Goals as set out in Appendix A of 'Think Climate RCT'.

11 CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The Council has a target to become a Carbon Neutral Council by 2030, and for the County Borough to be as near to Carbon Neutral as possible by the same date. The Tackling Climate Change Strategy 'Think Climate RCT' sets out a framework of action the Council will take to make significant progress, and lays strong foundations to enable the Council to make progress towards achieving the 2030 targets, as well as contributing to the Welsh Government carbon reduction ambitions for a Net Zero public sector by 2030 and its target for a Net Zero Wales by 2050 or sooner.
- 11.2 This report provides an update of the first six months of 2023/24. Whilst the Council can demonstrate positive steps towards meeting Carbon reductions targets across the Council's services to date, continuing progress will depend on a number of factors outside our direct control, including access to funding, technology, skills; lifestyle choices of our residents and wider policy direction and integration emerging from Welsh Government. Further embedding carbon reduction into the business of the Council through the new Corporate Plan will continue to strengthen the Council's own arrangements.
- 11.3 Achieving our targets requires all stakeholders and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf to work together. The Council will continue to work with all stakeholders across the County Borough, the region and across Wales

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972

as amended by

THE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT, 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1 February 2024

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COUNCIL'S TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

['THINK CLIMATE RCT'](#)

QUARTER 2 UPDATE

Report of the Director of Democratic Services and Communications

Contact Officer: Christian Hanagan

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-24

CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

01 FEBRUARY 2024

UPDATE REPORT ON EV CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE WITHIN COUNCIL ASSETS

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE ESTATES, IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND CORPORATE SERVICES, COUNCILLOR C. LEYSHON

Author(s): David Powell, Director of Corporate Estates, and Anthony Roberts, Head of Energy & Carbon Reduction.

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on progress made in the field of Electric Vehicle Charging, within Council Assets, in working towards to the Council's publicly stated EV charging goals.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Consider the contents of this report, and an accompanying presentation, as part of the ongoing work in response to the Council's EV charging ambitions set by the Climate Change Strategy and the EV Charging Strategy and Implementation Plan.
- 2.2 Receive further report(s) to provide updates on progress as/when deemed appropriate.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure that the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee has the opportunity to assess the Council's progress on the development of EVC infrastructure, within Council Assets, in the context of the wider Council carbon reduction commitments and published ambitions.

- 3.2 To support the implementation and delivery of the Council's Climate Change Strategy and associated EV Charging Strategy and Implementation Plan.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In late 2021 the work of the Transportation and Electric Vehicle Charging Sub-Group led to the approval and publication of the Council's 'Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy', which is a fundamental element of the development of an electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the County Borough. Similarly in late 2022, the follow up 'Implementation and Action Plan', were also approved and then later published, and it is these documents which form the fundamental element of the development of an electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the County Borough, along with the Council's 'Climate Change Strategy'.
- 4.2 The expansion of EV charging infrastructure, within Council owned assets across the County Borough, is supported by the Transportation and Electric Vehicle Charging Sub-Group. This report covers such works in support of the Fleet Transition to electric vehicles (EV), the expansion of EV charging infrastructure to include staff and visitor charging, and the substantial contribution of the Cardiff Capital Region's (CCR) programs.
- 4.3 It should be noted that Transportation and Electric Vehicle Charging Sub-Group has recently been restructured, with the aim of streamlining resources in response to the Group's current programme. The Group now reports on the EV charging Action Plan progress quarterly, to the main Climate Change Working Group.

5.0 PROGRESS UPDATE

- 5.1 To efficiently handle the influx of EV charging enquiries, a central EV enquiry inbox was established in 2022 and is maintained by the Energy & Carbon Reduction Team. At present all EV charging enquiries are handled through this mailbox, with other service areas encouraged to divert any correspondence they may receive through this central point of reference.
- 5.2 The Council's EV Charging Infrastructure Implementation Plan and Action Plan was published early 2023, with the purpose of providing 'clear guidance and advice on the requirements for the development of electric vehicle charging infrastructure, across the County Borough'.
- 5.3 The Council were successful in applying for over £540k of Transport for Wales/Welsh Government ULEV Transformation Fund grant funding for the financial years 2022/2023 and 2023/2024. It is anticipated that Corporate Estates will submit an application for a third year of ULEV TF funding for the FY 24/25 in January 2024, however the details surrounding this are still being considered.
- 5.4 The Council have procured the 'CLENERGY EV' management system which allows complete electronic oversight of all charge point assets that the Council owns and manages. This management system was funded using the ULEV TF FY 22/23 grant funding.

- 5.5 To support the fleet transition to electric vehicles, the Council installed EV charge points at strategic sites across Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council for fleet use. Data concerning this roll out is shown below in Table 1.
- 5.6 ULEV-TFW grant funding for f/yr 22/23, enabled the installation of further EV charge points at sites across the County Borough for public/ visitor charging. Data concerning this roll out is also shown below in Table 1.
- 5.7 Officers in 'Frontline Services', working in partnership with the Cardiff Capital Region Transport Authority (CCRTA), secured funding to install 7kw to 22kw fast charging points, for public use, at car parking sites across Rhondda Cynon Taf as part of the Phase 1 roll-out.
- 5.8 In addition, funding has also been secured from the UK Government, via the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV), for EV charging points at further locations – including public car parks, Community Centres and Leisure/Education car parks. This will be complemented by funding from Welsh Government and the 'Cardiff Capital Region' as part of the Phase 2 roll-out. Data concerning both these phases of roll out is shown below in Table 1

<i>EV Charging Initiative:</i>	<i>Number of Sites:</i>	<i>Number of Chargers:</i>	<i>Number of Connectors:</i>	<i>Number now available for use:</i>
CCR - EVC Roll Out (Phase 1)	31	43	84	74*
CCR - EVC Roll Out (Phase 2)	26	26	52	42*
RCT Council Fleet Charging	13	14	16	16
WG / ULEV – TF **	9	11	18	1
TOTALS:	79	94	170	121

Table 1

Note: * This data is available and updated weekly on the RCT Campaigns webpage (see below)

** Some of the ULEV-TF charge points are already available for use by fleet and will be made available to 'others' for use during January 2024

- 5.9 Members of the public are updated of the installation progress through the public-facing EVCP campaigns [page](#), which is updated by Officers in 'Frontline Services' on a weekly basis.

- 5.10 Also utilizing the ULEV TF FY 23/24 grant funding, Officers in Corporate Estates have commissioned a feasibility study to identify 3 priority short stay sites with the potential to install 55kW DC Rapid EV Charge Points. It is anticipated that the outcomes of this feasibility study will inform RCT's ULEV TF FY 24/25 bid in January 2024 (see 5.3 above).
- 5.11 Officers are working with the GIS team to include a public map of Council/CCR EVC installations on the EV Charging webpage, and the ambition is to have this uploaded to the webpage by end of February 2024.
- 5.12 The presentation that follows this report will attempt to demonstrate and illustrate all the above progress.

6.0 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The 'CLENERGY EV' management system described above provides chargepoint users with a bilingual service, which includes a Welsh Language Telephone and Email Helpline, thus supporting the use of the Welsh Language.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The rollout of EV Charging infrastructure on Council assets assists the Council in meeting its target of having a publicly accessible charge point within 1 mile of 90% of residential properties. However, it has to be recognized that very few people in RCT can afford an Electric Vehicle, so this expansion of charging infrastructure does not benefit all residents and visitors to the County Borough.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 As detailed in Section 5 above, the rollout of charging infrastructure has benefited from external grants from various WG/TfW/ UK ULEV funding streams. This has been supplemented by support from existing internal resources.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 There are no legal implications arising from this update report.

10.0 LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES.

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 The Well-being of Future Generations Act asks public bodies to work better with people, communities and each other to meet the Sustainable Development principle. The Council's approach to the implementation of the Act agreed by Cabinet is to make sure that its requirements are embedded into the everyday business.

- A Healthier Wales – Electric vehicles produce no combustion emissions and so help to reduce local air pollution contributing to a healthier environment. The expansion of charging facilities across the County Borough assists the transition to non-combustion engined vehicles.
- A More Equal Wales – Whilst the expansion of charging facilities does provide more opportunities for EV drivers to charge their vehicles, especially those who live in terraced houses with no access to private off-street charging, it is recognized that very few people in RCT can afford an Electric Vehicle.
- A Resilient Wales – The adoption of electric vehicles is key to the success of a sustainable low carbon, integrated transport network throughout the County Borough.
- A Cohesive Wales – The visible presence of EV charging points within the County Borough will have a positive effect on public awareness whilst displaying the Council’s outward commitment to climate change action.
- A Vibrant Wales - The implementation of much needed EV charging infrastructure will improve EV uptake thus improving the quality and sustainability of the natural environment whilst providing benefits to the local and regional economy in terms of tourism, residential and business growth.
- A Prosperous Wales - Implementation of the required EV charging infrastructure will boost the Council’s status as a destination for tourism and business growth.
- A Globally Responsible Wales - the introduction of EV charging points will reinforce the Council’s commitment to climate change whilst also striving to achieve a zero-carbon future as defined within Central and Welsh Government legislation

11.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The intent of this report is in furthering the ambitions for the Council’s Climate Change Agenda.

12.0 CONCLUSION

- 12.1 This report provides an update to members of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee regarding the progress made by the Council in promoting the use of electric vehicles, and in achieving progress towards published targets set by both the Climate Change Strategy and the associated EV Charging Strategy.

Contact Officers: **David Powell 01443 424144**
 Anthony Roberts 01443 281146

Note: A short 'Active Presentation' will follow this Report



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24

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

1st February 2024

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF
HIGHWAYS, STREETCARE AND
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

Agenda Item No: 6

**REVIEW OF WELSH GOVERNMENT
20MPH SPEED LIMIT**

Author: Tim Phillips – Temporary Head of Traffic and Transportation

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in respect to the Welsh Governments (WG) reduction of 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 consider the contents of the report and;
- 2.3 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise further the impact the scheme has had 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 would 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 argue that by reducing the national speed limit from 30mph to 20mph on restricted roads you will 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 However it was 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.
- 3.7 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.

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 \(gov.wales\)](#)

3.8 The criteria were adopted by the WG and later used by TfW to assess all LA restricted roads. 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. The adopted assessment criteria are set out below:

- **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.

- Consider only 30mph roads.
- Road Classification (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.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Whilst Welsh Ministers have the necessary powers to amend primary legislation and introduce a national default speed limit of 20mph on restricted roads, the WG was 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 As the legislative change enabled the WG to implement 20mph limits, LA's were still legally bound to consult on and then implement a TRO to establish any 30mph exceptions.

- 4.3 The first step in implementing any TRO is for officers to initiate a period of informal consultation with local members in order to present the proposals for 'exceptions' within their respective wards and seek feedback. Comments were recorded and an officer led response was issued to each Local Member directly addressing all matters raised.
- 4.4 Having sought acceptance from Local Members in respect to the location of each exception 30mph limit, officers were then able to proceed to give Public Notice of the intention to implement a TRO to establish a 30mph speed limit for each exception site.
- 4.5 Officers consulted on and implemented 84 exceptions across RCT, with 18 in the Rhondda, 16 in the Cynon and 50 across Taf, which is amongst the highest number of exceptions implemented by a LA across Wales.
- 4.6 Public Notice of the exceptions was given on the 17th July 2023 and during the 21-day response period, the Council received 20 responses, 19 in opposition to the proposals and 1 in support. Of the 19 objections, 17 were objecting to a road remaining 30mph and requesting the limit be reduced to 20mph. The remaining 2 objections were in respect to sections of road that were to default to 20mph.
- 4.7 Whilst the consultation phase was ongoing, the Council's Consultant Partners WSP were commissioned to complete the technical assessment of the works required to amend the signing across RCT's road network to reflect the change of default speed limit.
- 4.8 The appointed consultant was also tasked with compiling all the technical documentation required to enable the Tendering of the works and appointment of a contractor. RCTCBC subsequently appointed Horan Construction Ltd as the main works contractor who were tasked with implementing the works required to change the speed limits across our network.
- 4.9 The scale of the project was significant, with over 3140 signs needing to be removed and over 2000 new signs having been erected. Hundreds of gateway arrangements have also either been removed, amended and or replaced in order to reinforce the transition between limits with this specific package of works having been undertaken by the Councils Streetcare Services Team and their sub-contractors.
- 4.10 In addition to the amendment of the specific speed limit signage, Officers had identified an opportunity to reduce RCT's annual energy costs and carbon footprint by removing many of the now obsolete illuminated road signs from our network. With the reduction in speed limit to 20mph, there is no longer a regulatory requirement to illuminate many of our road signs. The table below indicates the number of signs earmarked for de-illumination:

Area	No. of illuminated signs
Rhondda	553
Cynon	475
Taff	946
Total number of signs =	1,974

Table 1: Total number of signs to be de-illuminated by area.

- 4.11 The average cost to power each sign is £21 per annum, therefore the anticipated cost saving to the Authority if all 1,974 signs were de-illuminated is estimated to be £41,454 per annum based on current energy rates.
- 4.12 Whilst the main works package being delivered by Horan Construction Ltd is substantially complete, secondary works packages are still ongoing and due for completion by 31st March 2024. One such package includes the provision of supplementary signing and road markings around school sites with an additional 313 signs and road markings to be installed, an example of which are shown below:



Image 1: Sign face to be erected at school sites.

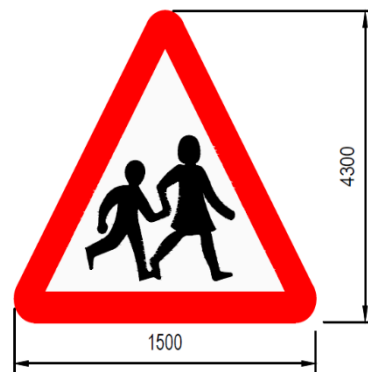


Diagram 1

Image 2: Thermoplastic road marking.

4.13 Following the implementation of the scheme on the 17th September 2023, officers have received and responded to a significant number of contacts from the public. Up to 50 daily contacts were received in the days immediately following the 17th September. The nature of each contact varied widely from residents querying speed limits on their local roads, complaints of new signing arrangements being installed in the vicinity of properties, requests for speed limits to be raised or lowered, to general objections to the principle of the 20mph limits. As the scheme has become more established the number of specific contacts regarding the scheme has significantly reduced and become more sporadic.

4.14 Targeted attacks and vandalism on the newly installed 20mph infrastructure has been well reported across Wales. Unfortunately, infrastructure within RCT did not escape this mindless vandalism with signs being damaged and or sprayed over in many locations, however some of the worst affected areas were:

- Llanharry
- Tonyrefail
- Aberaman
- Llwynypia
- Pontypridd
- Glyncoch

In response, RCT's cleansing team have been responding to each instance and cleaning the signs, or where the damage is significant officers are arranging for the sign/post to be replaced. However, it is noted that the longer the scheme has been in situ, the frequency with which these acts of vandalism are occurring is declining.

5. MOVING FORWARD – POST IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 The current priority for officers at this time is to ensure the physical works to implement the infrastructure needed to support the 20mph speed limits is completed and in compliance with current technical standards which is essential if the limit is to be enforced.

5.2 Enforcement

5.2.1 Gosafe temporarily suspended enforcement of 20mph limits in September 2023 following the legislative change. This decision was made in order to allow drivers to adjust to the new speed limits and allow time for LA's to update the road signage and implement the required TROs.

- 5.2.2 Gosafe and Welsh Police forces will actively support the new national 20mph speed limit and along with other partners such as Welsh Fire and Rescue services, LA's and community speed watch groups have adopted an engagement focused approach to 20mph.
- 5.2.3 On the 8th January 2024, 'Operation Ugain' was launched across Wales in order to deliver roadside engagement. The priority is to inform and educate the general public through engagement with communities in areas where the speed limit has changed from 30mph to 20mph.
- 5.2.4 Speed monitoring equipment is used to identify people travelling over the speed limit, before police officers stop the vehicle and give the driver a choice between roadside engagement or points and a fine. This approach is designed to help drivers adjust to the change during the initial stages of the rollout.
- 5.2.5 With regard to more traditional methods of enforcement in 20mph areas that were previously subject to 30mph, the decision to enforce will be made at the discretion of a Chief Constable and will be communicated in advance through official sources.
- 5.2.6 Enforcement by Gosafe's fixed and mobile camera units in locations where enforcement previously occurred will continue and whilst the public get used to the change in default limit, the threshold for enforcement in 20mph limits will be temporarily increased to 10% plus 4mph, meaning drivers will only be prosecuted for driving at 26mph and above in a 20mph limit.

5.3 Monitoring

- 5.3.1 The responsibility of monitoring the impact of implementing the default 20mph limit sits with TfW. TfW published the 'Default 20mph speed limit on restricted roads Monitoring Framework Document' in September 2023, which sets out how they intend to monitor the impact of the scheme for up to five years post implementation.
- 5.3.2 The main components of the monitoring frameworks are as follows:
- **Objectives** – Statements explain what should be achieved by implementing a default 20mph speed limit.
For example:
 - Reduce injury and death.
 - Encourage a change in Travel behaviour.
 - Reduce negative effects of vehicle use on the wider environment.
 - **Key performance indicators (KPI's):**
For example:

- % of traffic compliance with the 20mph speed limit.
- Change in 85th percentile speed.
- Change in mean speed.
- **Data collection methods:**
 - For example:
 - Speed volume and vehicle classification data.
 - Vehicle and pedestrian interactions.
 - Roadside air quality.
 - Qualitative attitudinal surveys.
 - STATS19 collision data.
 - GPS Journey time data
 - Bus GPS data.

5.3.3 TfW will be responsible for collating data and reporting against the KPI's set out above. Reporting period will be every six months for the first-year post implementation, following which reporting will take place annually.

5.4 Impact of 20mph default limit on Vehicular speeds and collisions

5.4.1 As the scheme has only been operational since the 17th September, it is far too soon to evaluate how effective the scheme has been in respect to reducing vehicular speeds and collision rates. However, the WG has commissioned Agilysis to undertake periodic independent analysis of vehicle speeds post implementation of the scheme.

5.4.2 On the 25th September, eight days after the implementation of the new default limit Agilysis published their first report analysing the change in speeds on 500km of roads in ten Welsh Towns and Cities using data collected from mapping company Tom Tom. Their analysis demonstrated a 2.9mph drop in average speeds, from 22.7mph down to 19.8mph based on data collected from thousands of journeys.

5.4.3 Agilysis have since undertaken a second study, examining data captured three months post implementation of the default limit. The data was collected from the same roads as the initial study to ensure consistency. The analysis identified a slight bounce back in speeds compared to the previous study with average speeds down by 2.4mph compared to the 2.9mph in week following implementation.

5.4.4 The data also highlighted a variation in reduction of average speeds across the area surveyed with the largest reduction in average speed recorded at 3.2mph and the smallest reduction of 1.3mph. Over half (52.9%) of all journeys were driven above the 20mph speed limit, with 9% of all journeys analysed were driven above the enforcement threshold speed of 26mph.

5.4.5 The WG have commissioned their own monitoring of speeds at a small number of sites within each LA with monitoring being undertaken at five sites within RCT. The result of this monitoring is displayed in the table below:

Location	Week	Pre 20mph default speed limit (85%ile)	Post 20mph default speed limit (85%ile)
East Rd, Tylorstown	1	35	33
East Rd, Tylorstown	2	34.6	33
Penrhys Road, Tylorstown	1	32.2	31
Penrhys Road, Tylorstown	2	31.4	31
Brynheulog Terrace, Tylorstown	1	32.8	34
Brynheulog Terrace, Tylorstown	2	32.6	33
Llewellyn Street, Pontygwaith	1	28.5	28
Llewellyn Street, Pontygwaith	2	28.4	28
A4233 Pleasant View, Tylorstown	1	29.2	28
A4233 Pleasant View, Tylorstown	2	29	28

Table 2: Speed monitoring data collected by WG pre and post implementation of 20mph default limit.

5.4.6 Unfortunately it is too early to examine and evaluate the impact that the default 20mph speed limit has had on collision and personal injury rates across Wales and RCT. However, research analysed by the Global Road Safety Facility suggests that even a 3mph drop in average speeds would lead to a reduction of 32% killed and 25% seriously injured on our roads. Further analysis by WG and RCT officers will be undertaken once sufficient data is made available.

5.5. Analysis of journey times

5.5.1 Pre implementation of the default speed limit, the WG were predicting through their research that 'most journeys will be around one minute longer'. Unfortunately, testing this hypothesis and assessing in real time the impact that the default speed limit has had on journey times across RCT's Road Network is not feasible at this point in time. Whilst WG will be reviewing the wider impact on journey times across Wales utilising the independent services of companies such as Agilysis and Tom Tom, RCT officers will examine local journey times

by utilising telemetry provided by bus operators travelling along key routes. However, officers are mindful that traffic patterns across RCT are currently distorted by extraordinary factors beyond the control of the Council and the time is simply not right to commence such analysis. For example, the rail network across RCT has been severely disrupted by the ongoing TfW sponsored works to electrify key valley lines, with services having been suspended on some routes since the 20mph default limit was introduced. As a result, many former rail users have now reverted to using personal cars to complete their journeys which has led to an increase in congestion along key routes which will have undoubtedly impacted journey times for all road users.

5.5.2 There is anecdotal evidence that suggests bus operators have been affected by the implementation of 20mph limits within RCT and across Wales, with operators reporting that services would need to be reviewed and timetabling adjusted to accommodate for any delays to services. Bus operators running services within RCT are expected to submit revised timetables for 2024/25 services during February 2024 but are yet to engage formally with officers with regard to any issues with 20mph limits.

5.5.3 The Deputy Minister for Climate change addressed the suggestion that delays to buses had led to services being cut, in the Senedd on the 10th January 2024. Mr Waters commented that "...bus companies had all the information about changes to speed limits available to them to adequately plan for the introduction of the 20mph" and "some bus operators like Cardiff Bus changed their timetables before the new speed limit came in" whereas "Arriva and First Cymru did not" and others such as "Stagecoach decided not to make changes because they did not anticipate that the changes would impact significantly on journey times". Mr Waters also stated that there are many other factors affecting bus services across Wales at present and therefore we must remain mindful of the impact those issues are also having.

5.5.4 In response the WG have asked bus companies to submit their journey time data so that it can be reviewed.

5.6 Future review of speed limits in RCT

5.6.1 The submission of a petition to the WG at the end of 2023 with close to 500,000 signatures has caused widespread debate over the benefits and disbenefits of the scheme. The petition calling for the 20mph law to be rescinded and 30mph limits reinstated also appears to have been the catalyst for members of the public to contact the Council requesting 20mph limits across the RCT be reviewed.

- 5.6.2 This ongoing debate, has led the Deputy Minister for Climate Change to write to all LA's on the 23rd January 2024, confirming his appointment of a small specialist review team that are tasked with providing an independent challenge to how the 20mph default limit has been implemented and how LA's have applied and interpreted the Exception guidance outlined in section 3.8 above.
- 5.6.3 Preparatory meetings have already been held with LA's to gain an insight as to how each LA applied the Exception guidance and the resultant impact on the highway network. For example, there is a significant variation in number of exceptions applied by LA's across Wales, with some retaining very few 30mph limits, whereas RCT retained 84 30mph exceptions.
- 5.6.4 The review team will upon conclusion of their investigation prepare a final report, accompanied by a draft updated guidance on setting speed limits in settlements affected by 20mph default speed limit and exceptions. It is intended that the updated draft guidance will assist LA's with reviewing 20mph and 30mph speed limits where there is concern, either on the part of the LA or Community that the current limit is either too high or too low.
- 5.6.5 RCT currently has a list of five roads where officers consider there may be sufficient justification to warrant further review. As communities continue to react to the recent changes, it is anticipated that calls to review additional routes may increase as residents and community leaders request limits to revert back to 30mph and conversely exceptions sites revert to 20mph.
- 5.6.6 It is important to note however, that unless there is a clear and obvious error associated with an existing speed limit that is considered detrimental to the safety of highway users, it is proposed that no widespread review of 20mph/30mph speed limits will take place in RCT until after the draft updated guidance on setting speed limits is published by the WG appointed review team during summer 2024.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Screening Assessment has been completed by the WG in respect to the legislative change.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no Welsh language implications associated with this report.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Consultation was undertaken by the Council in pursuit of its duty as Highway Authority and in accordance with the requirements of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.
- 8.2 Should the publication of the updated draft guidance on setting speed limits and exceptions by the WG appointed review team cause RCT to propose further changes to current speed limits, then officers would be obliged by the requirements of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 to consult and give Public Notice.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 There are significant financial implications associated with the implementation of this 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.
- 9.2 The implementation of this initiative across RCT has been fully funded by WG Capital Grant. The table below summarises total spend by year. Note a further funding bid is currently being prepared by officers seeking additional funding in 2024/25 in order to complete any outstanding works and begin preparations for any formal review of routes that may be required subject to the publishing of the updated draft guidance on setting speed limits and exceptions during the summer of 2024.

Financial Year	Grant allocation (£)
2021/22	53,500
2022/23	1,130,000
2023/24	2,934,568 (projected)
2024/25	TBC

Table 3 – RCT's WG Road Safety Capital Grant allocation by year (realised and projected)

- 9.3 During the implantation phase of this initiative, the WG suspended the Road Safety Capital Grant application process to enable LA's to concentrate on the delivery of the Default 20mph speed limits. With works now substantially complete and the scheme operational, WG have invited LA's to bid for Road Safety Capital funding once again in 2024/25. Officers are currently preparing bid submissions.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 Whilst Welsh Ministers have utilised existing powers to change primary legislation to introduce a default 20mph speed limit on restricted roads in Wales, it was 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.
- 10.2 The WG had identified various Legislation, Regulations, Guidance and Policy documents that needed to be revised prior to the implementation of the default limit on restricted roads.

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

- 11.1 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.
- 11.2 The legislation supports the objectives set out in ⁵Llwybr Newydd: The Wales Transport Strategy 2021, which prioritises walking and Cycling above all other 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.
- 11.3 Many of the anticipated benefits of introducing a 20mph default speed limit 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.

12 CONCLUSIONS

- 12.1 The RCT Traffic Services Team continues to complete the delivery of this WG initiative in accordance with WG legislation and technical guidance.
- 12.2 Upon publication of the draft updated guidance on setting speed limits and exception criteria, Officers will carefully consider any amendments and what impact it may have on RCT's road network. Officers will work with all stakeholders to ensure any road that meets the threshold for review, will then be subjected to a review in a timely manner.

⁵ [Llwybr Newydd A New Wales Transport Strategy 2021: full strategy \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/llwybr-newydd-a-new-wales-transport-strategy-2021-full-strategy)

- 12.3 Officers will continue to assist TfW and other agencies in respect to monitoring the impact of the scheme, ensuring the requirements of the TfW monitoring framework are upheld.
- 12.4 Officers will continue to work in partnership with the Police and Gosafe to promote operation Ugain and ensure adequate roadside engagement and enforcement of the default 20mph speed limit is undertaken to ensure greater compliance by drivers.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24

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

1st FEBRUARY 2024

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF
HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORTATION AND
FRONTLINE SERVICES**

Agenda Item No: 7

**HIGHWAYS INVESTMENT SCHEME
UPDATE**

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 Scrutinise the update on highways infrastructure within the County Borough with particular reference to the asset management strategy and investment strategy; and,
- 2.2 Scrutinise the expenditure required to maintain the highway infrastructure asset.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The highways infrastructure is the single biggest asset that the Council owns, valued at £3.42billion (2023 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:
- 1,296km of carriageways
 - 1,167km of footways
 - 1,580 highway structures including 197 road bridges
 - 30,038 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

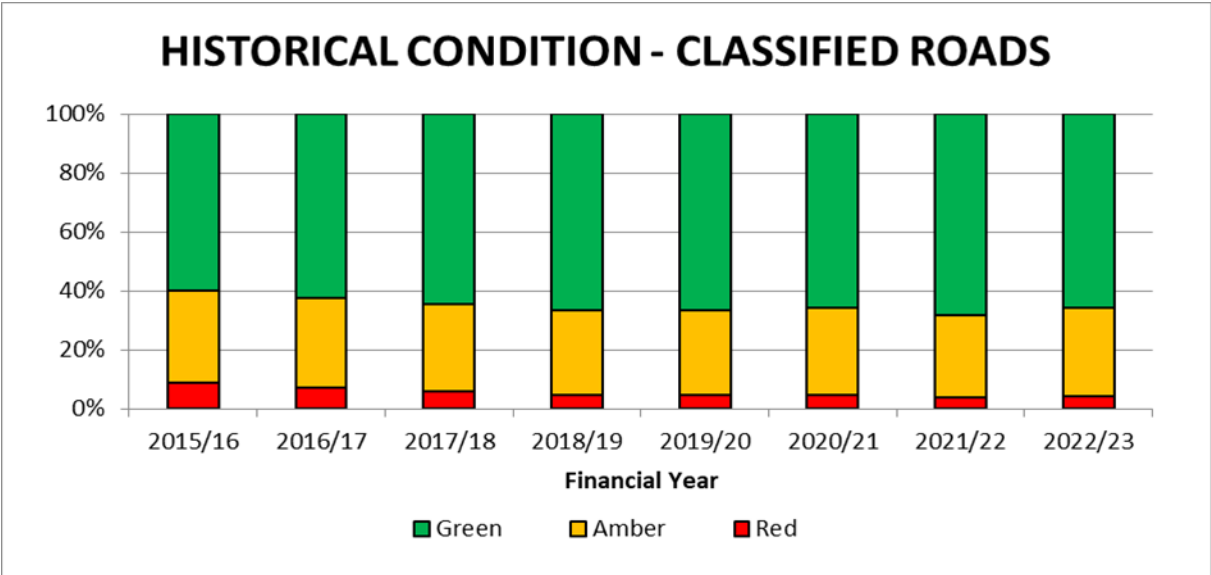
- 4.1 Due to the extensive investment in the highway infrastructure with delivery a priority, the COVID pandemic and lack of staff resources, a new HAMP and ASR is being upgraded. Currently a number of the new ASR's have been completed in draft format and are programmed to be presented to Cabinet shortly.

- 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 some of the 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 aim is to increase the scope of this inhouse work in future years. The traffic signals management has also been taken back inhouse 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 0.66% worse than the Wales Median of 3.04% in 21/22 (No 22/23 comparison data is available) it is the same as last year.
 - **Investment in B class roads.** The amount of B class roads in a poor condition is 5.7%, this is 1.54% worse than the Wales Median of 3.26% in 21/22 (No 22/23 comparison data is available) it is a deterioration of 0.9% from last year.
 - **Investment in C class roads.** The amount of C class roads in a poor condition is 3.7%, 8.03% better than the Wales Median of 11.73% in 21/22 (No 22/23 comparison data is available), a deterioration of 0.1% from last year.
 - **Investment in U class roads.** The amount of U class roads in condition band 4 is 6.14%, an improvement of 2.56% with 14.5% in condition band 3 an improvement of 0.3%. Due to the subjective nature of the survey some fluctuation year on year is anticipated. The combined percentage in bands 3 and 4 has fallen from 23.50% to 20.64%
- 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 78 in 2022/23 – 5 less than in 2021/22.
- 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 has replaced all its lit bollards with unlit bollards. There are currently 2939 lit signs remaining in the Authority. This figure will reduce as lit signs are being replaced with unlit signs as a result of the 20mph proposals.

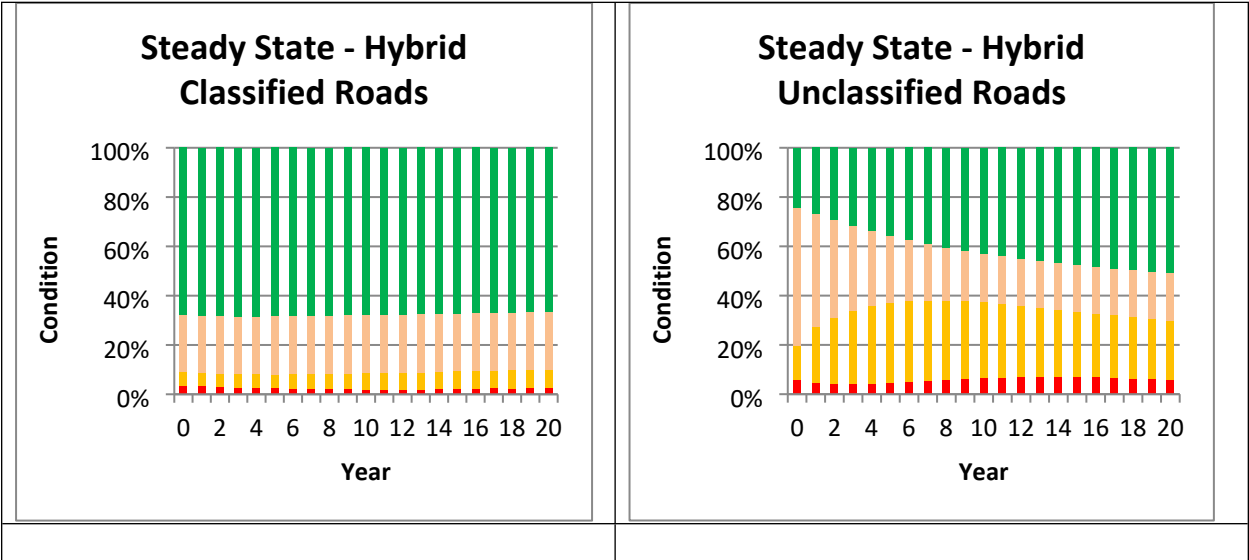
- 4.6 Unfortunately, our bridge stock is in poor condition based on the stock critical bridge indicator score of 60.63%. Our average bridge condition indicator is 73.93% having declined slightly from a figure of 74.44% (2021/22). This trend is likely to continue over the forthcoming years as the number 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. Planned inspection and maintenance of structures reduces the risk of emergency interventions. These interventions may require traffic management to be in place over a long period or require essential structures to be closed for use.
- 4.7 In 23/24 to date, 71 carriageway schemes have been completed out of 84, 29 footway replacement schemes out of 46 have been completed, and 10 out of 12 unadopted roads have been brought to adoptable standard. The remaining schemes in all categories will be completed by end of March 2024 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.

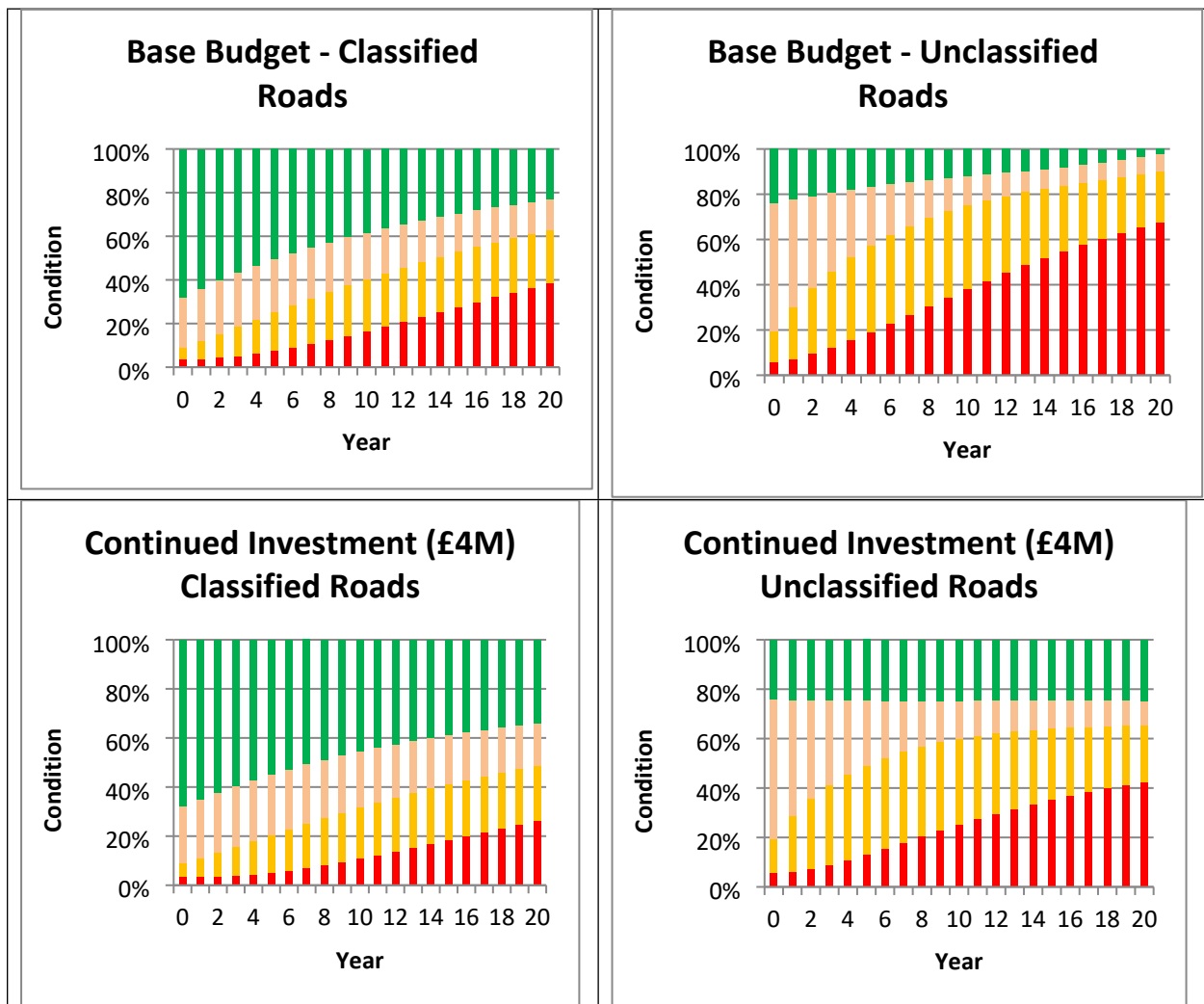
5. INVESTMENT STRATEGY

- 5.1 The Council's strategy for investment in highways in the short term is to continue additional investment to improve the asset for the next 2 years. It is then hoped that additional investment will continue 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 be in 24/25 an anticipated £4.5m. Based on this information the decline in the condition of the highways is modelled.
- 5.3 The investment within the carriageways element in 24/25 is an anticipated £4.0. Carriageway condition projection has been modelled on a number of scenarios:
- i) Hybrid Steady State (£9.55M/year)
 - ii) Return to base budget (£550k/year)
 - iii) Continued additional investment (£4M/year)



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 carrieway networks for 20 years based on the scenarios shown above. There are many possible steady state options ranging from a totally preventative approach (£4.0M) 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 (£9.5M) in which some of the worst condition roads are repaired each year and some preventative treatment is undertaken.





- 5.5 If Council capital funding levels return to the base budget. The network will deteriorate considerably with more than 11 times the current amount of the network being in the RED condition by year 20. This equates to approximately an additional 700km of the road network being in the red condition band.
- 5.6 If Council capital funding levels are set at £4.0M/year for the carriageway schemes and a hybrid treatment strategy continued, the network road trend of improving condition will reverse and the network will return to deterioration but significantly more slowly than at base budget levels. An extra 120km of the network would be in the red and amber bands by year 20.
- 5.7 £44M 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 and countryside structural assets. £3.8M has been invested in repairs to these structures in the last 4 years.
- 5.9 In addition to the above council investment, £50.5M will have been spent by March 2025 repairing the damage to the highway network following Storm Dennis in 2019 all funded via Welsh Government (excluding tips).

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. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

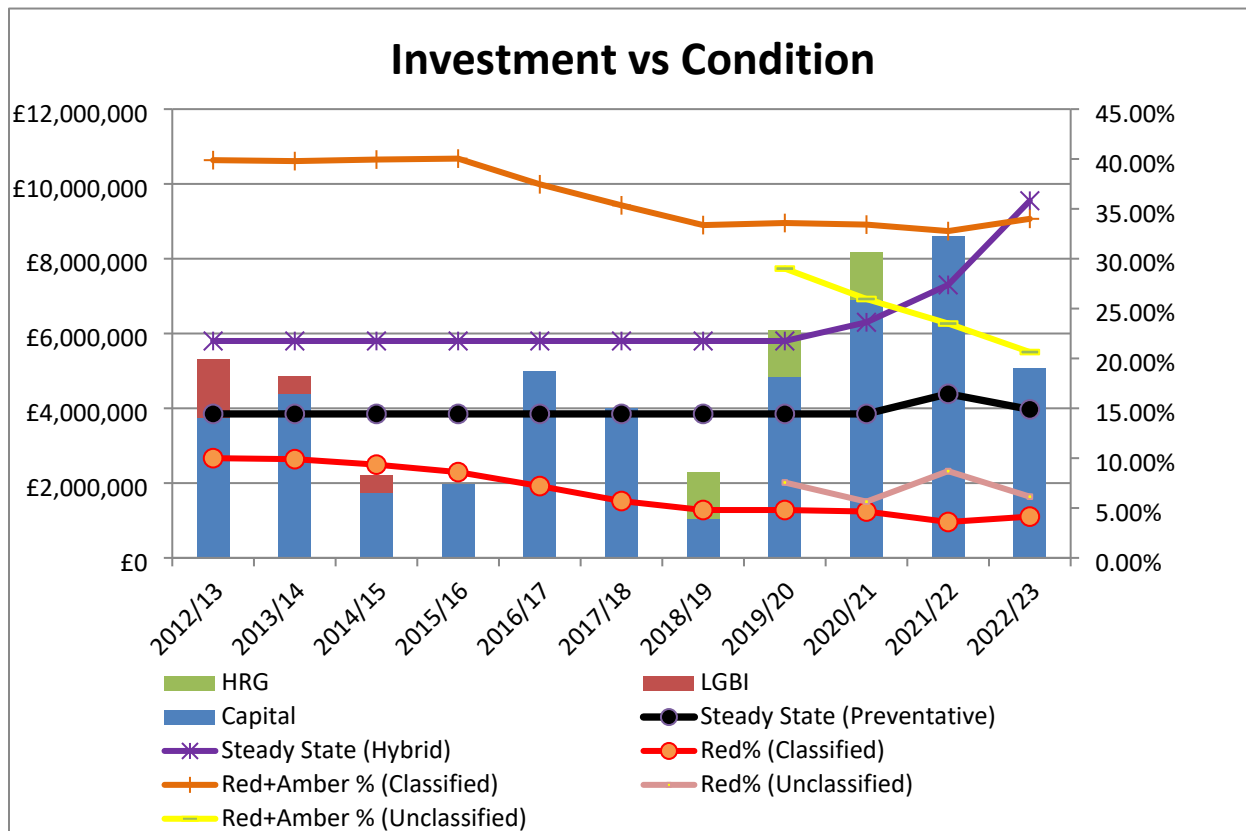
There are no negative or adverse Welsh Language implications with this report.

8. CONSULTATION

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

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 Between 2017/18 – 2021/22 the Council has secured £6.912m from WG via its Highways Refurbishment Capital Grant.
- 9.3 The Council secured £756,621 from WG in 2020/21 via its Local Government Roads Maintenance Revenue Grant.
- 9.4 Between October 2015 to March 2024 the Council has invested £65.624m in its highway infrastructure assets ie carriageways, structures, park structures, etc.
- 9.5 In March 2023, Council approved a further significant investment of £14.235million over the next 3 years (23-26)



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

9.7 The estimated steady state renewals investment requirement for carriageways is £4M 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 £9.55M would be required to maintain a steady state. These figures are for carriageways only and do not include footways, drainage, structures, etc.

9.8 The Council has received £7.338m in 23/24 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 £0.146m match funding has allowed £7.484m to be invested via Welsh Government into the highway infrastructure.

9.9 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, with completion currently scheduled for Summer 2024.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 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.

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

- 11.1 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.
- 11.2 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.
- 11.3 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 Rhondda Fach Community Route which will provide access to settlements including Maerdy, Ferndale, etc. together with other projects including upgrading sections of the Taff Trail, Cynon Trail and links to the Church Village Bypass.
- 11.4 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.
- 11.5 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 has also implemented a power reduction on 3,000 of the newer LED lanterns which will again reduce carbon footprint.
- 11.6 The Council has been working closely with the Cardiff Capital Region to successfully secure funding and have installed public-use electric vehicle (EV) charging points at 31 car park sites (Phase 1), which are in located in visible, accessible and reliable locations such as public car parks and leisure centres

across Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Council have also delivered a further 26 sites (Phase 2). A further 9 sites are being developed for delivery later this calendar year. Thus making facilities for the public to switch to electric cars reducing the carbon footprint.

- 11.7 The service area is using a 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).
- 11.8 The traffic signals and crossings assets within the Council are also set to be modernised over a phased period of 2 years having commenced this year. This will remove halogen lamps, upgrade equipment, use of 3G, etc which will provide savings of over 11.7t of carbon.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 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.
- 12.2 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.
- 12.3 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.
- 12.4 If Council funding returns to base budgets, without additional council funding the network would deteriorate at an ever increasing rate with an additional 245km 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 the Council's Highway Investment Scheme funding.
- 12.5 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 and reduce the risk of emergency interventions.
- 12.6 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 2023/24**

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

**TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE UK GOVERNMENT SHARED PROSPERITY
FUND AND THE RHONDDA CYNON TAF LOCAL INVESTMENT PLAN**

1 FEBRUARY 2024

**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 this report is to provide an update on the delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) during the first half of the programme including:

- 1.1 Details of the Year 1 performance in the delivery of the Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) local investment plan;
- 1.2 An update on the latest position in respect of Year 2 delivery; and
- 1.3 A summary of the key challenges to the successful delivery of UKSPF during the remaining programme period.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

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

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The UKSPF supports the government's wider commitment to level up all parts of the UK and provides funding for local investment between 2022 and 2025.



- 3.2 Since Members last received an information report in January 2023, significant work has been undertaken to mobilise and commence delivery.
- 3.3 The key focus during the remainder of the programme which ends in March 2025, is to ensure that the area takes full advantage of the significant resources still available from UKSPF.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Following the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union on 31st January 2020, UKSPF is the UK government's domestic funding, providing £2.6 billion of support for local investment between the period April 2022 to March 2025. It is a key part of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda, forming part of a range of complementary funding, including the Levelling Up Fund and Community Ownership Fund which have both been allocated by a round based competitive bidding process.
- 4.2 The way in which UKSPF is allocated and managed is very different to the previous EU programmes. UKSPF is allocated to local areas for 3 years based on a formula rather than by inviting competitive bids that was normally used for EU Funds. It is not possible to compare allocations at a local authority level with previous EU funding as many EU funded projects spanned more than one geographical area. In addition, the timescales that funds were allocated was different with a seven-year allocation period used. There are also differences in the types of projects eligible to be supported between the two types of funding. As a delegated fund, UKSPF does however give more direct accountability to local government than was the case with EU Funds.
- 4.3 As a key part of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda, UKSPF supports the following key objectives:
- 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.
- 4.4 The programme aims to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK by focussing on three overarching investment priorities:



- The **Communities and Place** investment priority enabling 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 enabling places to fund interventions that support local businesses to thrive, innovate and grow; and
- The **People and Skills** investment priority helping to 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.

5.0 RHONDDA CYNON TAF LOCAL INVESTMENT PLAN

- 5.1 RCT has a total of £45M or 16.2% of the allocation available for the South East Wales region. This includes £37M core SPF funds and a further £8M for Multiply activity and is the highest allocation of all Welsh local authorities.
- 5.2 The 3 core investment priorities for the UKSPF of Communities and Place, Supporting Local Business and People and Skills includes a range of eligible interventions that has allowed us to align many of the priorities identified in the Council's Corporate Plan with these investment priorities.
- 5.3 The RCT plan includes projects that deliver against a range of Council priorities including, but not limited to the following:
- The development and resilience of communities by improving facilities and access to services.
 - Provision of support to 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 key community places.
 - Provision of small business support and development including finance for growth and resilience.
 - Delivery of Employability and Skills initiatives to support unemployed and economically inactive people enter the labour market.

6.0 YEAR 1 PERFORMANCE

- 6.1 Despite the delayed start to the programme with only 4 months of the first year available for delivery following the funding approval, significant work was undertaken in 2022/23 to mobilise and commence delivery.
- 6.2 Significant spend of £3.4M was achieved, which is 60.4% of the Year 1 allocation, and 9 live projects were underway.
- 6.3 Tangible results were also evidenced with examples including:
- Over 100 organisations / enterprises receiving grants.
 - 95 households supported to take up energy efficiency measures.
 - An increase in engagement numbers of over 3,000 in community led projects and initiatives.
 - 25 jobs created; and
 - 43 people sustaining employment for 6 months following support.

7.0 YEAR 2 PERFORMANCE

- 7.1 Formal approval to transfer underspend from Year 1 into Year 2 was not received from UK government until August 2023. Prior to this, the Council was expected to deliver at risk.
- 7.2 During the first 6 months of this financial year, spend of £3.7M or 25% of the Year 2 allocation was still achieved despite some further unavoidable delays such as recruitment difficulties.
- 7.3 It is also encouraging to note that during the first 6 months of this financial year, over 20 projects were in delivery with 97% of the Year 2 allocation financially committed and therefore on track to deliver.
- 7.4 A range of competitive grant schemes have also been made available to organisations and business such as the Councils Community Grant Programme and Business Growth Grant Programme. This approach ensures that resources are aligned with local priorities and can be distributed quickly and equitably to areas of need across the county borough.
- 7.5 As in other areas across Wales, the delivery of Multiply has proved challenging from the start of the programme due to the scale of available funding and lack

of delivery infrastructure. However, successful procurement exercises were undertaken over the Summer and delivery is now well underway with external providers taking the lead on behalf of the Council.

7.6 There is often a time lag between expenditure being incurred and the subsequent evidencing of outputs and outcomes. Tangible results have however been evidenced between April to September with examples including:

- 6 commercial buildings completed or improved.
- 114 organisations receiving grants.
- 156 households supported to take up energy efficiency measures.
- 67 low or zero carbon energy infrastructure measures installed.
- 20 jobs created as a result of support.
- 14 enterprises receiving grants.

8.0 KEY CHALLENGES

8.1 Spending the significant level of available resources on Multiply activity continues to be a challenge and although flexibility was applied by UK government at the end of Year 1 to allow the use of Multiply within the wider People and Skills investment priority during year 2, there has been no indication that any future flexibility will be permitted.

8.2 Year 3 of the programme presents a challenge as any expenditure incurred after the 31st March 2025 will not be eligible for UKSPF even though project closure will be necessary as well as a reporting requirement to UK government until May 2025.

8.3 The Council will therefore continue to work with UK Government, the WLGA and Welsh Authorities to ensure that the implications in respect of the lack of flexibility regarding the use of Multiply and the Programme Closure arrangements are fully understood and that every effort is made to influence the way forward for the benefit of the region.

9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

9.1 There is no requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment or Socio-Economic Analysis for the purposes of this update report.

10.0 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There is no requirement for a Welsh Language Impact Assessment with this update report.

11.0 CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 11.1 Engagement with local partners and stakeholders will continue throughout the life of the programme.

12.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 12.1 There is no requirement from UK Government for match funding although it is encouraged where available to maximise the impact of the UKSPF.
- 12.2 The cost of the additional staff resources necessary to deliver the programme in RCT are also funded from the UKSPF.

13.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 13.1 There are no legal implications associated with this update report.

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

- 14.1 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.
- 14.2 All activity will make a significant positive contribution to the goals of the Well Being of Future Generations Act. In particular, the economic and environmental well-being of Wales, supporting the delivery of a prosperous Wales, a more resilient Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

15.0 STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

- 15.1 Successful delivery of the local investment plan and its associated projects are of strategic significance across the county borough.



16.0 CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

- 16.1 The UKSPF is providing £45M for local investment in Rhondda Cynon Taf and despite the delay in receiving approval from UK government, significant work has already been undertaken during the first half of the programme period.
- 16.2 During the remainder of the programme, every effort will be made to ensure that the area takes full advantage of the significant resources still available and that the benefits for the county borough are realised.
- 16.3 The Council will continue to engage with UK Government, the WLGA and other Welsh Authorities to influence the way forward for the benefit of both the county borough and the wider region during the existing programme but also in the planning of any transitional arrangements into the next round of UK government funding.

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