



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019/2020**

**PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, COMMUNITIES AND PROSPERITY  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**12<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2019**

**REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT, LEISURE &  
HERITAGE SERVICES**

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**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the progress made in advancing the portfolio responsibilities of the Cabinet Member.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that Members scrutinise the content of the report.

**3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 To challenge any arising matters or issues with the relevant Cabinet Member and to ensure that the appropriate mechanisms are in place to effectively scrutinise the Executive.

**4.0 BACKGROUND**

4.1 On the 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2018, the [Overview & Scrutiny Committee](#) considered a report regarding the engagement of the Executive at future Scrutiny Committees going forward.

4.2 At the meeting Members agreed to receive Cabinet Members at future Scrutiny meetings on a quarterly basis to present relevant information relating to their portfolio areas, alongside the relevant Director.

4.3 Such an approach will provide Scrutiny Members with the opportunity to further challenge the Executive, as the Cabinet Members can provide details (both verbal and written) relating to the potential challenges facing the services, as

well as the opportunities and policy changes currently being considered. This approach would allow each Cabinet Member the opportunity to update Scrutiny Members on the delivery of their respective areas of the Corporate Plan, reference Key Performance Indicators and important details of policies being considered for future decisions which are referenced for future business, or those which have been developed since the last publicised Work Programme.

## **5.0 WASTE SERVICES**

5.1 We continue to be committed to increasing recycling levels and achieving the 70% recycling target set by Welsh Government for 2024/25. In 2018/19, we recycled, reused or composted 61.00% of our waste. The recycling target for 2019/20 set by Welsh Government is 64%, and our provisional recycling rate for Q1 is currently over 68%. RCT are currently exceeding this year's target and are close to achieving the future target of 70%.

5.2 We continue to raise awareness of recycling and encourage and support residents to recycle more. Earlier this year, Welsh Government supported and funded 'Everyone's Doing IT' a joint recycling campaign with six South East Wales Local Authorities. The campaign included the slogan 'Stop, Think, Recycle and encouraged residents to recycle as much as they can, particularly as more people across Wales are now choosing to recycle, and question those that are not. During February and March 2019, we worked with Ynysybwl residents to improve their recycling levels as part of this campaign, undertaking targeted engagement to positively influence recycling behaviours. The results achieved below demonstrate the impact of the campaign from the targeted awareness raising with Ynysybwl residents.

- 1,069 properties in Ynysybwl targeted as part of the campaign
- 157 more households now recycle correctly (31%)
- 119 households have positively increased their recycling habits
- 57 more households now recycle

5.3 In addition to the areas identified in the campaign above, we have also worked with and involved residents in other communities through face-to-face doorstep engagement, support and clear information on how to recycle, we have seen positive results.

5.4 We have also worked with primary schools across RCT to raise awareness of recycling through various recycling competitions including:

- **Easter egg packaging competition** – 45 Primary schools took part and collected 1.4 tonnes of packaging.
- **Christmas card competition** – 60 Primary schools took part, with approximately 4 tonnes of cards collected.
- **School uniform competition** – 29 Primary schools took part, 1.75 tonnes of uniform collected.
- **Battery competition** – 40 Primary schools took part, with 1.74 tonnes of batteries collected.

5.5 In July 2018 we celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> annual 'Love where you Live' awards ceremony which recognised those residents that are involved and use inspirational activity in the community to help improve the local environment,

prevent environmental issues escalating and keep Rhondda Cynon Taf safe, clean and green. The award ceremony was held in July and entries continue to be of a very high standard.

5.6 We have progressed our plans for the Bryn Pica Eco Park Development with funding and outline planning arrangements now in place. Ground clearance investigations have been undertaken successfully for the first phase of the scheme and the strategic business case has been developed which includes the site design and building layout as agreed Cabinet in outline plans last year.

5.7 As part of the Budget Consultation process, residents have told us:

*“This is a good idea. All recycling done on one site rather than hauling to external companies all over the country – carbon footprint reduction.”*

*“We’ve all got to do a lot more to recycle and protect the environment”.*

5.8 The multi-million-pound Eco Park development will help turn more rubbish into a resource by collecting and re-using waste materials such as the heat and electrical energy produced on site. The scheme will also bring other benefits that the Eco Park will bring to residents, communities and businesses include:

- Interest from businesses to locate within the County Borough, taking advantage of cheap sustainable energy.
- Increased employment opportunities within Cynon Valley, for people with a range of skills.
- Using cheap sustainable (green) energy to facilitate the local economy.

5.9 A new MRF is currently being installed at Bryn Pica which will significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the MRF operation which will contribute positively to the Council achieving Welsh Government’s recycling targets. The new technology deploys a series of processes to sort materials through technological process rather than manually “picking” different waste streams into their commodity types. The new equipment will

- Process in the region of 120 tonne per 10 hour shift;
- Reduce the manpower requirements substantially;
- Improve the recovery of recyclable materials (both quality and quantity);
- Reduce residual waste from the process with resultant lower disposal costs;
- Have a guaranteed useful life of at least 10 years;

## **6.0 STREET CLEANSING & GRASS CUTTING**

6.1 The Street Cleansing service has made positive progress in recent years against a backdrop of austerity measures and the resultant budget pressures on local services. The service has taken a proactive approach to reviewing resource levels and working practices to ensure efficiencies and service changes are identified to provide value for money whilst continuing to improve service standards. The service remains focussed on keeping the cleanliness of our streets and highways at a high standard and has maintained a high level of performance last year.

- 6.2 97.6% of our streets were graded B and above (that is streets considered by members of the public to have an acceptable level of cleanliness). This is above the 2017-18 all Wales figure of 95.8%.
- 6.3 The amount of dog fouling and graffiti on our streets has decreased this year. The percentage presence of dog fouling decreased to below 15% dipping to 13.7% and graffiti remains below 5%.
- 6.4 There has been a decline in fly tipping incidents despite significant changes to Waste collection allowances (2 black bags / no side waste) which was introduced in June 2017. 96.94% fly tipping removed within 5 working days, 11<sup>th</sup> in Wales, above the Welsh average of 95.08%. Average number of days to remove fly tipping was 2.21 days exceeding the target of less than 5 days. 23.64% fly tipping incidents led to enforcement activity

Number fly tipping incidents:	
2013/14	3,399
2014/15	3,729
2015/16	3,746
2016/17	4,116
2017/18	3,591
2018/19	3,153

- 6.5 Dog fouling (internal data) Since PSPO team set up in November 2017 – issued 277 FPNs
- 6.6 2,521 Fixed Penalty Notices issued and 2,642 warning letters (for litter/waste/dog-fouling/fly-posting offences and incidents)
- 6.7 Review and improvements in Street Cleansing operational practices and schedules. The service is built on the experience and local knowledge of staff to target resources to maximise productivity and to provide a variety of work to the operational teams. This has resulted in changes to working practices including ‘working from home’, detailed reviews of cleansing and sweeping schedules. Focusing resources on street cleaning activities from Mondays to Wednesdays/Thursdays then undertaking more detailed cleansing work – removing detritus from kerblines, cutting overgrowth/weeds, to improve the overall street environment. This has provided the teams with greater pride and ownership of their areas by giving them the opportunity to select and suggest specific areas of concern. Town Centres remain a clear focus and improvements have been made with increased early morning sweeping and pressure washing.
- 6.8 Transferring grass cutting/overgrowth maintenance to Street Cleansing. The Street Cleansing service has developed into a ‘streetscene’ service by realigning other street services – highways grass cutting, overgrowth, enforcement, together with close coordination with other key related services namely Waste & Recycling and Highway Maintenance.
- 6.9 Tackling fly tipping with robust enforcement and response teams. The presence of fly tipping across the County Borough is a blight on the environment as well as having a negative impact on habitats and causing pollution. The Enforcement team investigates all incidents of fly-tipping and undertakes a

range of activities to try to raise awareness and take enforcement action to reduce the impact of fly-tipping. Actions include surveillance, patrols, visits to businesses, general clearance of fly tips, enforcement action through legal procedures. The changes in Waste collection limits to '2 black bags' or 'no side waste' has also required close monitoring, awareness and enforcement actions to be undertaken to minimise any potential increase in fly-tipping.

- 6.10 Tackling dog fouling. The presence of dog fouling has been a long-standing problem and following widespread public consultation and support has resulted in the introduction of a Public Spaces Protection Order from October 2017. In order to regulate the PSPO additional staff resources have been employed to patrol and enforce the rules around dog controls and dog fouling in all parts of the community (streets/parks/countryside routes/playgrounds/schools). The service has invested in awareness raising campaigns, provision of free dog bags, provision of over 300 new dog bins.
- 6.11 Community project working. The service has set up a Community Green Team to work jointly with community groups and schools and Keep Wales Tidy to transform or develop areas into outdoor facilities or pockets of land into community use. This encourages local schools and community groups to take ownership and get involved in maintaining areas once the initial 'kick start' is provided by the team. Examples of projects include :- log circles and seating areas for school children to enjoy outdoor features/gardens and to learn about planting and wildlife; creating spaces into allotment use and litter picking/fly tip clearance with groups

## **7.0 FACILITIES CLEANING**

- 7.1 In 2018/2019 we have significantly invested £135,000 in the refurbishment of 2 more Public Conveniences situated in Talbot Green and Treorchy. In the refurbishment we needed to consider the product design, recommendations in building layout ensuring that we used high quality solid surface products that enabled end users to benefit from the most robust sanitary ware, eliminating many of the problems experienced by the use of conventional washroom materials/products. This durable sanitary ware is designed to normalise the washroom environment and coupled with their intelligent water management systems it offers significant water and energy savings giving us a comprehensive water control.
- 7.2 We have in total 18 Public Conveniences throughout Rhondda Cynon which we maintain together with 24 urinals. We have installed electronic opening and closing devices on the toilets so that we can control the opening and closing times by our computers or phones. This system has enabled us to close the toilets in emergency situations, spending more time cleaning the premises and less time on the road.
- 7.3 During 2018/2019 3 more schools made the decision to come in house with ourselves, they are Tonyrefail Community School which also consists of the Primary School, Cwmaman Primary and Llanhari Primary which added another £202,818.77 to our income.
- 7.4 We have worked with the Heads of the schools making sure that the cleaners were trained to British Institute of Cleaning Science and invested in the correct

machinery. We worked on the cleaning routines in the school and changed the way in which the cleaners had worked to ensure we had the correct productivity in place and that the school would be cleaned to a high standard. We monitor the cleaning on a regular basis and work with the Heads/Maintenance Officers, Cleaners and discuss daily problems that we face.

- 7.5 2018/2019 has been a challenging year for us with buildings being closed and new premises coming on. We work closely with Corporate Estates to ensure that we know in advance of any potential closures that might involve redundancies. If you can imagine it's like a massive jigsaw but regular meetings with Corporate enable us to discuss the possibility of moving cleaning staff to other areas and saving jobs.
- 7.6 Throughout 2018 /2019 RCTCBC facilities cleaning team have worked in partnership with Health and Social Care to improve the outcomes for service users experiencing challenges in the home environment as a result of substance mis-use, physical and mental ill health, frail, elderly and dementia. Our innovative project tackles poor home conditions that enable small works and aids and adaptations to progress allowing the service user to be released from hospital and return home with a package of care.
- 7.7 Our cleaning service team has a long history of working with Public Health and Community Services to tackle home conditions that require home sanitizing, removing bodily fluids, accumulated waste, foodstuff, infestations, hoarding and viruses.
- 7.8 The Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. Our service supports agencies to tackle self-harm and self-neglect thus working towards the wellbeing goals.
- 7.9 There is a growing problem across the country with hoarding, self-neglect and increasingly poor home conditions that require the intervention of public service. The cost to local authorities and individuals to address these issues can be expensive.
- 7.10 Our expert team is trained to British Institute of Science and our staff are trained to deliver certified training and are DBS checked to provide assurance to agencies that we have the skills to work with the most vulnerable in our communities.
- 7.11 We identified the ability to support other agencies and individuals in the community and started by advertising our services on the Council website. Demand and interest in our service has grown steadily and we developed working relationships with health and social care.
- 7.12 The service we provide is professional and we are respectful at all times that we are working in our clients home. We tailor our approach and services to meet their needs.

- 7.13 Some of the challenges we face include working with the threat of physical and verbal abuse especially when our client is experiencing poor mental health or dementia and we recognize that the situation can create stress for them.
- 7.14 Fundamentally our service has been built on the principles of “doing with” and not “doing for or to” our clients working to restore their dignity paving the way for longer term care and support packages to build their skills and capacity to achieve independent living
- 7.15 During 2018/2019 we have worked in the homes of clients enabling them to return home from hospital regaining the dignity and their independence. This is ongoing and sad to say the figures increase yearly.

## **8.0 FLEET**

- 8.1 Being a support service to all council departments that utilise vehicles our main focus is in keeping the vehicles operational.
- 8.2 This year, in line with the cyclical fleet replacement programme we also put a particular emphasis on an attempt to reduce the overall fleet size by improving vehicle utilisation. At the same time ever mindful on improving our “green profile” in operating the latest in engineering design / more fuel efficient vehicles.
- 8.3 By working in collaboration with our vehicle end users, we were able to assist them in finalising their service reviews, resulting in improving their transportation needs by obtaining the most fit for purpose vehicles but at the same time reducing transport costs. As an example, the review within Community & Children’s Services was finalised and this saw an overall reduction in both the number of vehicles they operate and the total cost of providing that transport. The vehicles they now have also means that the service is to a large extent future proofed, and should be able to meet the ever changing demands of community support in both the children’s and adults areas over the coming years.
- 8.4 In terms of performance the service ended the year in an overall budget surplus position as far as the revenue budget goes. The funding for the fleet replacement comes from the capital budget allocated. This was closely managed and we took delivery of 72 new vehicles during the period April 2018 to March 2019. Some of these were the second line gritters in the Highways department which help to bolster the winter maintenance provision.
- 8.5 Improved MI systems has enabled the saving of one admin post. Two of the former full time posts are now covered by part time staff. All key performance indicators were met and we finished the year on green status.
- 8.6 Our relationship with VOSA and the DVSA continues in good form and we remain a double green operator in terms of the OCRS (The Operator Compliance Risk Score) that these government organisations use to monitor vehicle roadworthiness and compliance to legal standards in all vehicle operators.

- 8.7 Fleet size reduced overall by 6 vehicles, despite growth in some areas like recycling/waste collection due to both extending the green season and the use of dedicated vehicles for some waste streams and also the introduction of newer services like parking and littering enforcement
- 8.8 The % of fleet vehicles meeting the latest design standards in Carbon / NOX gas emissions (Euro 6 and/or sub 100g/km) rose from 39% of our fleet in April 2018 to 59% as of April 2019.
- 8.9 Driver licence checks have now been centralised in Fleet and this has led to better management overall with timely checks so reducing the risk of drivers being on the road with invalid licences
- 8.10 Challenges within the service that we met (and are still meeting)
- High sickness levels, especially in the vehicle workshop
  - Difficulty in recruiting fully qualified motor mechanics – there is a severe industry shortage
  - The change to Euro 6 and most recently Euro 6.2 has made vehicle maintenance more challenging. Better diagnostic equipment and extensive training is required. The need for external maintenance support has grown and continues to grow at the fast pace in line with these design changes.
  - Vehicle purchase prices are increasing, several times a year in the case of some manufacturers, When evaluating the costs of hire versus buy, we are now finding that in many cases the cost of buying and maintaining in house is far more costly than hiring the vehicles with maintenance carried out by the vehicle hire company. This year we moved the replacement of the large street sweeper vehicles from outright purchase to a long term hire (5 years) and savings calculated at over £30,000 are expected to materialise over the contract period.

## **9.0 HTS TRANSPORT**

- 9.1 The Council advocates that the provision of an enhanced school transport service encourages school attendance and operates the largest and most generous school transport service in Wales.
- 9.2 In 2018/19, the service worked with 66 coach, minibus and taxi contractors to operate 424 school routes, using 400 vehicles ranging from taxis to 70 seat coaches and specially adapted vehicles, as well as local bus season tickets, to provide transport for 12,007 learners each day, at a cost of £9,505,215 per annum.
- 11,118 mainstream learners to English medium, Welsh medium and faith schools and colleges at a cost of £6,290,297.
  - 889 learners with additional learning needs to units and other educational establishments at a cost of £3,214,918.
- 9.3 Being a frontline service, its delivery is high on the political agenda and discussed at the regular 1:1 meetings that the service's Directors have with the Leader of the Council, and at senior management briefings with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure & Heritage Services. The Council publishes



its Learner Travel Policy, Information and Arrangements annually. It underpins the operational management of school transport service and its application has full Cabinet support.

- 9.4 The Policy shows how the Council exercises its discretionary powers under the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008, and sets a clear strategic direction within the context of the statutory requirement. Embedded within, the associated operational guidance ensures that the Service's transport procurement and route planning strategies are clear, and applied consistently and equitably across the County Borough, so that anomalies in provision do not set a precedent to justify additional entitlement beyond the already very generous eligibility criteria.
- 9.5 The return to school in September is the focus for customer contact. The service made extensive use of press releases and social media, such as Website, Twitter and Facebook, to exchange information and keep users informed. Call centre scripting contains the most up to date detail taken from the Council's Learner Travel Policy, Information and Arrangements. "Transport Travel Packs" were issued to the incoming Year 7 pupils during transition visits to their new secondary schools, advising on safe travel, behaviour on school buses, the wearing of seatbelts, and the importance of carrying the bus pass at all times.
- 9.6 Enhanced proactive monitoring ensures that transport contractors deliver the required standard, with warnings or terminations being issued where appropriate. Contractors apply "No Pass No Travel" strictly to ensure that Comprehensive School learners travel on the correct buses. This has reduced unnecessary overcrowding, helped with vehicle and route scheduling, and has led to improved behaviour. The importance now attached by parents and learners to the school bus pass is emphasised as the replacement of lost bus passes accounted for 68% of the customer contact in July and August 2018.
- 9.7 The significant changes resulting from the mainstream school transport review and the retendering in the Rhondda to complement the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools investment attracted a higher level of public contact before the start of the 2018/19 academic year. The communication strategy made intensive use of the call centre for first responses, with self-service web based communications and customer transactions. This allowed the service to focus on the more complicated enquiries and released staff to spend more time on adding service value and reducing costs. Even so, 1,911 residents made school transport enquiries between July and September 2018 (53% of the total for 2018/19).
- 9.8 The high level of customer feedback helps to improve the operation and minimise ongoing complaints. An annual review of the customer interface, following the return to school in September, identified the causation factors for the remaining interaction and messages were refined and clarified in order to improve the ways in which the service communicates with parents/carers, pupils, schools and contractors, ensuring that business processes and service delivery remained effective and consistent.
- 9.9 An example of this was the introduction of an e-form used by parents of those children with additional learning needs who are entitled to free school transport to provide information about their child. It has helped the contractors to

understand each passenger's likes and dislikes, behavioural and medical needs, and specific requirements. This has had a positive impact on the journey experience to and from school for these vulnerable learners, ensuring that their service is tailored and better able to provide comfortable, safe and stress free transport.

- 9.10 Greater use of the Capita ONE Management Information System has streamlined the transfer of pupil data between the schools, the Admissions Team in Education and Lifelong Learning (ELL) and the Integrated Transport Unit (ITU). During the year, the development of additional specific transport reports has saved further time, eliminated the duplication of effort and removed the potential for data loss or corruption during transfer. With these routines embedded into the daily routine, efficiencies have been achieved, reducing costs and improving service delivery standards.
- 9.11 With support from Corporate Finance, robust financial monitoring procedures have enabled effective budget monitoring and provided the information necessary to manage effectively a highly volatile and changeable service. Together with enhanced gate-keeping procedures that manage exceptional transport arrangements against a clearly defined policy, service creep has been contained enabling delivery well within the agreed budget for the tenth year running.
- 9.12 The school transport service is constantly changing to maximize its efficiency with amendments to routes every summer, such as undertaking the addition or removal of stops, to ensure proactive vehicle efficient scheduling. In the 2018/19 financial year, the service also benefitted in full from the more efficient vehicle utilisation under the Cynon mainstream retendering. There was also the part year impact of the Rhondda mainstream retendering. Published policies are refined annually to reflect operational practice, and the latest review removed eligibility anomalies across the Council from September 2018 to resolve historic cases of over-entitlement also had a financial benefit.
- 9.13 The three phase mainstream school transport re-tendering was completed in time for the return to school in September 2018. Amounting to £6,822,857 in 2016/17 before the project commenced (63.9% of the school transport service), full year savings of £1,031,306 (15.1%) have been achieved by adopting a strategic approach to contract award and management. This has maximised the use of 70 seat vehicles and the award of large multi vehicle contracts that link a number of routes together.
- 9.14 The highways network, and hence safe walking routes, is constantly evolving as a result of improvements such as new crossings, developments and road safety features. These changes can affect eligibility for free school transport and therefore it is prudent to review periodically the impact of such changes and update individual eligibility. The most recent review of the mainstream school transport provision, implemented from the start of the 2018/19 academic year, removed transport on 7 secondary school and 3 primary school routes at a full year saving of £207,400, as the routes were deemed available to be walked safely.
- 9.15 Against a backdrop of austerity measures, school transport services continued to meet performance and budget targets, and deliver an excellent service

standard. Benchmarking exercises with other Councils, learning from their best practice, has ensured positive progress and service performance that compares well with the other Welsh Councils.

- 9.16 The daily transport cost per pupil with additional learning needs in 2018/19 was £18.45, compared with £17.29 (5th in Wales) in 2017/18, when the Wales average was £22.12.
- 9.17 The daily transport cost per mainstream secondary school pupil in 2018/19 was £3.03, with the average load per mainstream school transport vehicle being 51. This compares with £3.27 (4<sup>th</sup> in Wales), with the average load per mainstream school transport vehicle being 48 (1<sup>st</sup> in Wales) in 2017/18, when the Wales average was £3.98, with an average load of 28.
- 9.18 The Council treats the Welsh Language no less favourably, and has reviewed and translated its standard letters for wide audiences. It offers parents the opportunity to communicate with the service in Welsh and keep records of the requests as part of the admissions process. No one has requested this service to date. Three staff within the Service have a working knowledge of spoken and written Welsh.
- 9.19 During 2018 the Service received 2 requests for correspondence through the medium on Welsh, and 2 telephone calls from residents wishing to converse in Welsh were handled through the Call Centre. Again, there were no complaints about the service's use of the Welsh Language during this period.
- 9.20 In 2018/19, transport to a Welsh Medium or Dual Language School was provided to 3,577 mainstream learners. This represents 32.2% of the total. An Equality Impact Assessment considered that the impact of the Learner Travel Policy, Information and Arrangements was substantially positive in its effects on the Welsh language community, provided it delivered the school transport consistently and equitably. The latest review ensured that this was the case and it removed the identified anomalies from September 2018.
- 9.21 The SEN transport provision is tailored to the individual needs of the learner by a specialist team within the Service, and reflects the physical make-up of the community, with 889 of the 12,007 transported learners (7.4%) having additional learning needs. Throughout the year, special training in autism and epilepsy awareness, first aid, and understanding and managing challenging behaviour was provided for further drivers and passenger assistants.
- 9.22 In 2018/19, school transport has been delivered and managed in the most effective and integrated manner through a legislatively compliant and planned procurement strategy that embraces the Council's policy for discretionary school transport. Moving forward, daily operations will seek to maximise efficient customer interface, balancing service delivery against expectations. It will also be important to ensure that that the momentum of savings achieved through operational efficiencies is earmarked against as a further period of the consequential pressures under the next 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools initiative.

## **10.0 CPE & ENFORCEMENT**

- 10.1 Following the demise of the former South Wales Police Traffic Warden service in December 2010, the CPE Service, a combined on and off-street parking enforcement service, was introduced by the Council in Rhondda Cynon Taf in August 2012. The Council currently employs 12 Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) with 2 Civil Enforcement Officer Team Leaders whom patrol RCT enforcing on-street Traffic Regulation Orders, (marked and / or signed traffic restrictions) and the Council's off-street car parks estate. They have the Authority to issue Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) of up to £70 to any vehicle observed to be parking unlawfully.
- 10.2 The back-office PCN processing function is a vital part of the Service with many items of correspondence associated with the parking penalty enforcement process, (including responses to formal representations, DVLA queries and Traffic Enforcement Centre debt registrations), having legislative timescales to be adhered to.
- 10.3 In 2018-19 RCT became the Lead Authority of the South Wales Parking Group (SWPG) – a regional collaboration with Merthyr Tydfil CBC – for the processing of all PCNs issued across both Councils. Since assuming responsibility for the back-office PCN Processing function from Merthyr Tydfil CBC earlier in April 2018, the Council demonstrated the ability to successfully deliver this key service function on behalf of both Councils.
- 10.4 Additionally, during 2018-19, Councils in the former Gwent region, (Caerphilly CBC, Newport CC, Torfaen CBC, Monmouthshire CBC and Blaenau Gwent CBC), all resolved to apply for CPE powers across their individual County Boroughs; all expressed a desire for RCT to undertake such work on their behalf, thus expanding the SWPG.
- 10.5 The Council subsequently mentored each of the Councils listed above through the process of applying for CPE powers and all signed-up to an over-arching SLA with Council accordingly. From the commencement of the following year, 2019-20, all said Councils began their enforcement operations with RCT firmly established as a regional hub for PCN processing work.
- 10.6 A key role that the Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) undertake is in relation to dealing with complaints of vehicles parked on Keep Clear markings outside schools, on zig-zag lines approaching pedestrian crossings and in Clearways at bus stops, their physical presence prevents parking only whilst they are there. Once CEOs leave the area, indiscriminate parking re-occurs.
- 10.7 Following Cabinet approval to pursue a mobile camera parking enforcement solution in late 2017-18, in 2018-19 the Council successfully procured a new enforcement vehicle, which is fully equipped with an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) camera, utilising cutting edge infra-red technology to capture clearly defined images of vehicles parking unlawfully outside our schools, in bus stops and on pedestrian crossings.
- 10.8 Officers spent the summer on 2018-19 mapping hundreds of Traffic Regulation Orders onto the vehicle's software system, undertaking remedial works on

those sets of restrictions that required additional signage or refreshed carriageway markings, and thoroughly testing enforcement schedules.

- 10.9 Having received formal approval from the Welsh Government, which permitted the Council to use a so-called “approved device” parking enforcement methodology, the Council started enforcing the restrictions detailed above from 3rd September 2018 to coincide with the start of the 2018-19 school year.
- 10.10 The Council currently provides high quality and well maintained car parking facilities in all our town centres providing over 2500 parking spaces (pay & display in Pontypridd and Aberdare).
- 10.11 All said parking facilities have the benefit of lighting and CCTV, and the Council provide around 180 disabled bays for which there is no charge.
- 10.12 The Council currently has over 40 designated on-street Residential Parking Zones. The administration of Permits to park in in such Zones is undertaken by the Parking Services department and approximately 3,000 Residential Parking Permits were issued in 2018-19.

## **11.0 COUNTRYSIDE & PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY**

- 11.1 Continued development of the biodiversity grassland management programme using cut and collect technology, which in 2019 has seen the close and successful integration of working between the Streetcare and Countryside Departments. In support of the Council’s Biodiversity Duty.
- 11.2 The continued successful implementation of biodiversity grazing on Council owned land, and through integration of effort with the planning department, the delivery through planning agreements of an increasing number conservation grazing outputs on development sites. In support of the Council’s Biodiversity Duty. Through partnership work the continued delivery of the Heathy Hillside Project to prevent grass fires in RCT and deliver biodiversity outputs. In support of the Biodiversity Duty and RCT Community Safety Plan. As a partner with NPT CBC (lead) the successful securing of the ‘Lost Peatlands’ Heritage Lottery Funding to delivery habitat restoration and community involvement in and around the Pen y Cymoedd Windfarm scheme.
- 11.3 Over the last 6 months a start has been made on delivering the RCTCBC Tree Management System with mapping now complete and surveying of high risk areas has started. The section is still able to actively manage many of the 68 Key Countryside sites for public enjoyment and biodiversity additionally helping to contribute meaningfully to the Council’s Biodiversity duty.
- 11.4 The visitor centre at Barry Sidings Countryside Park has been successfully leased to a private individual who has developed the site with a thriving café and bike hub. Visitor numbers have never been higher.
- 11.5 RCTCBC Rights of Way Improvement Plan “Out & About Two” has been completed on time and ahead of many other Welsh Local Authorities. The delivery plan will now look to carry out necessary actions to maintain an effective Rights of Way service throughout the borough.

## **12.0 LEISURE**

- 12.1 Over the course of the last 12 months the Council has continued to deliver on its significant investment at its leisure facilities.
- 12.2 The Ron Jones stadium and Danny Evans Stand officially opened to the public in October 2018 and has just completed its first season of operation which has been extremely popular with over 20'000 visitors . The track has attracted many regional and local athletic meets and has been very well utilised by Aberdare community school and many of the local schools for their sports days. The track has forged great links with Welsh Athletics who have held a number seminars, coaching courses and regional meets and only see their use increasing in future years. The completion of the track, stadium and stand has completed the full regeneration of the area providing the Aberdare area with unrivalled sports and exercise facilities.
- 12.3 In November 2018 the refurbishment of the changing facilities at Abercynon SC were completed. This also included the complete upgrading of the main pool hall from repainting of the pool tank, renewal of air handing and ventilation system and upgrade of the ceiling thereby future proofing the facility for many years to come, in a total investment of over £400k.
- 12.4 January 2019 saw the opening of the brand new fitness facilities and 4G pitches at Rhondda Fach Leisure Centre, both upgrades were complemented with refurbishment of their changing facilities and corridors, circulation and reception areas. The facilities has been extremely well received and very well utilised with membership and usage growing by over 50%. The new pitches now attract a great number of local clubs to train and play at the first indoor 4G pitch in the authority.
- 12.5 The Sobell Leisure Centre is about to commence the refurbishment of its gym facility, development of a stand-alone spin studio and installation of a new turnstiles. This work is due for completion by Oct 2019. Additional work will also be carried out to upgrade the pool changing facilities during December 2019 and undertake work on the main pool.
- 12.6 The development of Llys Cadwyn has continued in readiness for a facility handover in mid Feb 2020. The development of the gym and class studio is at an advanced stage and tenders will shortly be issued for the provision of fitness equipment.

## **13.0 PARKS AND OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES**

- 13.1 2019/20 is the second year of a 3 year investment programme into the Councils parks and outdoor sports facilities. In 2018/19 the programme concentrated on improvements to the general infrastructure (roads, paths, walls, fences etc.) with over £750K works completed across the County Borough. In 2019/20 these infrastructure works continue alongside badly needed drainage schemes on football and rugby pitches
- 13.2 The recent completion and opening of 3G facilities at YG Rhydywaun and Bryncelynog Comprehensive School takes the total number of outdoor 3G facilities delivered to 13 across the County Borough. The Council has recently

announced funding for the development of a 3G facility in the Treorchy area to deliver on the Local Authority's ambition of providing residents with access to a 3G facility within a 3 mile radius of their home, no matter where they live.

- 13.3 The Council ambition to provide athletics facilities in each of the three constituent areas of RCT is near completion. The new facilities at Bryn Celynnog Comprehensive School includes an outdoor athletics facility as part of the wider package. In the Rhondda, works are now underway to make improvements (£800k) to the playing field and athletics track at the King George V facility in Clydach Vale. Works include resurfacing the track with a new synthetic surface and the installation of new floodlights ensuring the facility can be used all year around. This facility is due to open in later in the year.

#### **14.0 PLAY AREAS**

- 14.1 Continuing with the improvement programme for children's play facilities remains a core commitment of the Council, and at the end of this financial year a further 17 playgrounds will have been upgraded and modernised. Since the commencement of the programme in 2015, 111 play areas will have benefited from nearly £4 million of investment. As well as investing in Children's playgrounds a further £200k was allocated this year for the improvements of Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA's) and skate parks. Funding has been used to colour coat and line mark the courts and plans are in place to renew a skate park which has reached the end of its life.

#### **15.0 HERITAGE AND VISITOR ATTRACTIONS**

- 15.1 Capital investment in 2016 has enabled Welsh Mining Experience to progress as an award winning tourist attraction gaining recognition from many accolades such as:
- Welsh Hospital Awards – Winner – Best Family Venue of the Year 2018
  - Welsh Hospitality Awards - Highly Commended Events Team 2018
  - Autism Friendly Award 2019
  - Welsh Government Award - Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Service Award 2019
  - Dog Friendly Attraction 2019
  - Certificate of excellence from TripAdvisor 2019
  - Sandford Excellence in Education Award 2019
  - National Museum of Wales – Gained full accreditation for the first time in the sites history.
- 15.2 Sporting Heroes - Successful HLF application for – 18 month funded programme to introduce Heritage information boards within sporting changing rooms and facilities to celebrate the successes of local sporting Heroes from within the immediate communities.
- 15.3 In August 2019 the recently opened 'Coal Society' is the latest addition to the permanent exhibition spaces that tells the domestic story of life in the Rhondda from 1800's to the present day and is an accessible learning experience for all visitors incorporating the latest in touch screen interpretation.

- 15.4 2019 has also seen a major development to the education offer and with 10 new educational workshops providing Schools with an extended learning experience linked to the National Curriculum which resulted in the educational offer being recognised via the highly coveted Sandford Award.
- 15.5 WME achieved full Museum Accreditation award for the first time ever and also supported the Cynon Valley Museum Trust through successful re-application. Further to this, the Heritage Service based at WME have brought in around £53,000 worth of external funding for heritage projects and events as well as supporting community groups gain additional funding for their own heritage based projects and consultancy for the Insole Court Archive Group.
- 15.6 The Heritage service were invited to speak at the Welsh Federation Annual Conference and also gave a talk on International Women's Day at Pontypridd Museums and were also selected to feature in the Welsh Museum Advocacy Day at the Senydd in 2018 and again for 2019 later on this year and have curated and produced over 10 temporary exhibitions.
- 15.7 The Heritage Services first apprentice, Esta joined us in 2018, and has just been notified that she has been shortlisted for the WAG Apprenticeship Awards Cymru in the Tomorrows Talent award. Esta has been instrumental in re-developing WME's educational programme which has just been awarded the Sandford Award, a quality assured mark after a rigorous assessment and our Educational Outreach Officer, Kathrin has successfully been awarded a full bursary to attend the Group for Educators in Museums 2019 Conference worth over £400
- 15.8 The National Lido of Wales, Lido Ponty is Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Councils' number one tourist attraction. Since reopening in 2015 after refurbishment, it has gone from strength to strength welcoming in excess of 340,000 visitors with 164,000 being achieved within the last 2 seasons. This cements the fact that it always appears in the top ten places to visit in Wales.
- 15.9 The lido in the last 2 years has become an approved training centre for the Royal Lifesaving Society enabling Lifeguards to be trained to a high standard within the awarding body. Lifeguards who are trained at the Lido inevitable go on to work through the summer season with us.

## **16. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 16.1 There are no negative or adverse equality or diversity implications associated with this report.

## **17. CONSULTATION**

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

## **18. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 18.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.



**19. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

19.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

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

20.1 Places – creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live.

20.2 People – promoting independence and positive lives for everyone.

20.3 Economy – building a strong economy.