



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019-20**

**HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

**19<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2019**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, PUBLIC  
HEALTH , PROTECTION & COMMUNITY  
SERVICES**

**Agenda Item No.**

**COMMUNITY HUBS PROGRESS  
REPORT**

**Author(s):** Wendy Edwards, Service Director, Community Services

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Health and Well-being Scrutiny Committee with a progress report on the implementation of the Council's community hub plans.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Scrutinise the progress that has been made with the delivery of the action plan; and
- 2.2 Consider if there are any matters arising from the report that Members would wish to give further scrutiny.

### 3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide Members of the Health and Well-being Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to examine the progress made in respect of the implementation of community hubs and identify any other matters that Members may wish to further consider in the future.

### 4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council's approach to building resilient communities and early intervention and prevention includes the development of Neighbourhood Networks across the County Borough. The Neighbourhood Network is based on a set of characteristics and principles that will allow for a consistent application across the borough whilst offering flexibility to adapt to the needs of diverse communities. One of the key characteristics is that the Neighbourhood Network will comprise of a **Community Hub** and 'spoke/satellite' model.
- 4.2 Community Hubs provide a range of services provided by the public and voluntary sector in one or a number of closely located buildings in priority neighbourhoods. Bringing services together will provide a better public service offer and create economies of scale in terms of staffing and building costs. Making better, more cost effective use of our community assets and reinvesting resources in new or retrofitted, fit for purpose buildings will enable services to be sustainable in the longer term. The hub will as a minimum provide information and advice on site to the public and facilitate provision across the wider network of Community Spokes/Satellites within the Neighbourhood Network.
- 4.3 The Spokes/Satellites within the Neighbourhood Network will encompass the wide range of facilities, services, and groups run by public or third sector organisations all locally based in the designated catchment area. The hub and the associated spokes/satellites are intended to work as a network and by working in a more collaborative way enable the public to navigate all the relevant support available to them in their local area. The response will support a preventative approach that enables individuals, families and communities to access support as early as possible to prevent problems from escalating. These facilities will support a preventative approach that enables individuals and families to access support as early as possible to prevent problems from escalating.
- 4.4 This approach is expected to deliver the following outcomes:
- Better public services that are joined up, cost effective and accessible;
  - A community in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised;
  - A community that is well connected;
  - A community that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances;
  - A community that promotes and protects its culture and heritage.
- 4.5 This approach will, among other things, develop an infrastructure to support:
- A single point of contact within communities to access good quality information, advice and assistance;

- A platform to develop community capacity and volunteering;
- Opportunities for parents and families to improve their relationships and parenting skills;
- Opportunities for vulnerable people to seek support and be signposted to other services as appropriate;
- Opportunities for people to learn and develop skills in support of employment;
- Provide flexible community space for people to meet, share interest and socialise, thereby tackling loneliness and social isolation.

4.6 In determining where the Community Hubs should be located, consideration was given to the population size, natural boundaries and town centres, identifiable communities, alignment with school catchment areas, existing community support such as Communities First (now replaced by Communities for Work Plus) and Flying Start and availability of public transport. On this basis, ten geographical areas were identified and a community profile prepared of each area, including demographic, socio-economic, housing and educational attainment data.

4.7 The areas are:

- Rhondda Fach;
- South Cynon;
- North Rhondda;
- South Rhondda;
- Mid Rhondda;
- North Cynon;
- North West Taff Ely;
- North East Taff Ely;
- South East Taff Ely;
- South West Taff Ely.

A map of the Neighbourhood Network areas can be seen at **Appendix 1**

## **5. CURRENT COMMUNITY HUBS**

5.1 Two community hubs have recently been opened – Yr Hwb (Ferndale) which forms part of a Public Service Board Community hub pilot with the Gurnos in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council; and Canolfan Pennar (Mountain Ash) serving the Rhondda Fach and South Cynon areas respectively. It is expected that each Community hub will develop and provide services differently, depending on the needs within each Neighbourhood Network area. Although it is early days, these two facilities appear to be having a positive impact within their neighbourhoods and providing improved access to a range of services.

5.2 The **Hwb at Ferndale** is led by an anchor organisation, Fern Partnership. It will deliver the Council's commitments to the Welsh Government Children First Initiative under the Cwm Taf Wellbeing Objective 1, Thriving Communities with a focus on the Rhondda Fach 'Community Zone' and the PSB approach to developing "an integrated place based approach to building communities that prevents and mitigates the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences and breaks the intergenerational cycle of adversity".

- 5.3 Fern Partnership is responsible for the delivery of the childcare provision within the Hwb, and for the development of the wider Neighbourhood Network that will ensure the community of the Rhondda Fach is fully involved in the development of services at a local level. Ferndale library has been relocated to the hub building and the Council's employment programmes and learning provision can also be accessed there alongside a rapidly developing range of activities, advice and support for all ages, including Mental Health and Wellbeing services and support to build resilient families.
- 5.4 This is an innovative approach where the Council is co-locating its services in partnership with a third sector anchor organisation. It is anticipated that this will be a more cost effective and sustainable model. Fern Partnership have sought external funding to support the development of the Hub alongside a funding contribution from the Council.

Key achievements to date include:

- **Little Ferns** – registered 79 children since opening. Feedback from parents continues to be positive with particular reference to developing children's independence skills. Natural Resources Wales funding allowed the children to purchase gardening resources to find out about flowers and vegetables.
- **Library Services** – reported positive developments being based in a shared Hwb space. There has been a 41% increase in visitor numbers compared to the same period in 2019. They have 10 registered new Bookstart borrowers that focuses on enjoying books with your child due to parents/grandparents calling into the library when collecting their child. There has been an increase in adult and children memberships. The ICT Suite and meeting room are proving positive assets for the local communities. Staff have commented on how partnership work between the teams have enabled staff to signpost community members to services/support and information.
- **Community Coordinator** – appointed to support Neighbourhood Network.
- **Sensory Room** - now complete and open for community/organisation booking.
- **Primary CAMHS** - from 9<sup>th</sup> September, CAMHS have started offering support for anxiety, low mood, self-harm (no suicide ideation) via GP referrals and will have an ongoing presence in the Hwb.
- **Adult Learning** – classes confirmed to start in September (Play work, Food Hygiene, Essential Skills, Welsh, MECC, and Digital Literacy).
- **Dragons Savers Credit Union** – volunteers have shown an interest in supporting the Credit Union.
- **Family Information Service** - to host drop-in information sessions.
- **Lullaby Project** – music and song writing project for expectant mothers and parents of pre-school children.

- **Community Gardening Project** – on going project with 8 active members who meet on a weekly basis.
- **Volunteers** – 16 volunteers recruited to support the function of the Hwb – Little Ferns, Storytelling, Garden Project, Credit Union and Marketing.
- There has been a positive impact on **the wider neighbourhood network** through the facilitation by the Community Coordinator of activities outside of the Hwb. For example, the Schools Butterfly Project supported from NRW funding with two local schools - Llyn y Forwyn and Darran Park; drop-in sessions at the Dementia Café at Seion Chapel, and referrals made to courses and support available at other local facilities.

5.5 **Canolfan Pennar** at Mountain Ash involves the co-location of Council services – the library service, One4All and employment programmes; alongside a privately run café at the former Council Day Centre.

Key achievements in the first few months include:

- **Visitors to the hub** – 49,755 visits were recorded to the hub between June and September;
- **Library services** - visits to the library have almost doubled from 14,573 (June – Sept 2018) to 26,562 (June – Sept 2019).
- **Adult Learning** and **Employment support programmes** are working closely together and developing a much wider range of programmes for the community with partners such as the Hapi project and Adult Learning Wales. These include low level confidence-building courses to accredited courses. Provision is also available for people who have moderate or severe learning disabilities.
- **Digital Fridays** – attendance at Digital Fridays sessions has more than doubled since they were moved to the hub as customers find it is much more accessible.
- **Community engagement activities** have increased as community groups use rooms for a wide variety of purposes including Craft activities and local history talks.
- **Information sessions** are provided every month on a variety of issues such as eating disorders, raising self-esteem with referrals onto other provision including Work Clubs.
- **Job creation** - the expanded space available for the café tenant compared with her previous facility and the popularity of this location has enabled her to employ more staff. In addition, the offer of a hot meal at mid-day which formed part of the lease has addressed the concerns of previous Day centre users who feared the loss of what they considered to be a valuable service for older residents.

- Opportunities to link with the proposed Primary Care Hub to be developed in Mountain Ash by the Cwm Taf UHB, are being actively investigated.
- Canolfan Pennar has proven to be the most attractive of venues for people to gain the Information, advice and assistance they require and coupled with the growth of the café, which has grown to employ eight staff – previously two – footfall is extraordinary when compared to the same time period during the previous year.

5.6 However, it is important to note that this hub is more than merely a co-location of services and a café. Success is predicated on a different service delivery approach that has seen significant time invested in staff training, and engagement with a wide range of providers external to the Council so that customers can access the support and learning opportunities they identify they need on-site.

5.7 One aspect that has been identified as being crucial to ensuring the success of the wider neighbourhood network and community engagement across neighbourhood network areas is the role of a Community Coordinator. This has been evidenced at Yr Hwb where the Coordinator has been able to reach out to community, and health organisations across the Rhondda Fach facilitating developments across the wider area not just within the hub. Accordingly funding has been allocated for a similar (temporary) post to be made available in the South Cynon neighbourhood network area and it is the intention to work with partners to ensure that a similar role will be funded across other neighbourhood networks as the hubs are rolled out.

5.8 As further hubs are opened it is envisaged that they will support the targeting of provision at areas of highest need and contribute to the Council's early intervention and prevention agenda including improving people's health and well-being and enabling them to develop new skills so that they can gain, and stay, in work.

## **6. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS**

6.1 In order to support the development of community hubs and neighbourhood networks, changes have been made to staffing structures within the Council. The team responsible for Community Asset Transfers transferred over from Corporate Estates to Community Services in January 2019. This change has embedded the link between the transfer of Council assets to interested parties and Council community hub priorities and the development of neighbourhood networks. New staff were appointed to support these developments and a full team has been in place since September 2019. The team works very closely with third sector partners to ensure that community groups have all the support they need to develop sustainable plans for their community facilities. (The staffing and reporting structure can be seen at Appendix 2.)

6.2 A Community Insights and Social Value software tool has been purchased which is capable of providing an in-depth analysis of datasets to profile individual areas. This is currently being piloted with some community organisations with the view that it could be made available to all interested community groups to support their applications for funding in future by providing detailed profiling of their communities as well as calculating the social value from potential projects.

6.3 Alongside these developments significant research has been undertaken to explore options for maximising community benefits through procurement contracts. A report is currently being developed for Cabinet consideration.

## **7. NEXT STEPS**

7.1 Plans are at an advanced stage for the establishment of community hubs at Porth Plaza and Llys Cadwyn (Pontypridd). Both of these developments will be Council-run facilities while a third sector led development is being planned with Age Connect Morgannwg at Aberdare.

### **Porth Plaza**

7.2 This is an existing community asset that is currently under-utilised by the public. It currently delivers One4All services, houses Porth library and is a base for staff who work on employment programmes. A privately-run crèche is also on-site. The Council has been successful in gaining funding from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Community Learning Grant and an ICF grant to redesign the interior of the building so that it is able to offer access to a wider range of public and third sector services and meet the needs of community groups including residents whose activities have been displaced since the closure of the local Day Centre. A Changing Place for people with disabilities will ensure that the building is accessible to all people while the library will be moved to the ground-floor and will benefit from improved digital facilities for customers.

7.3 An extensive mapping exercise has been undertaken to identify community buildings, services and forums in the wider area and some unmet needs and gaps in provision were identified in the community.

In summary the main gaps identified for South Cynon, Porth were:

- Open access play schemes;
- Youth provision in Porth Town Centre;
- Activity based services, respite and befriending services for the elderly and frail;
- Accessible and inclusive opportunities for individuals with Learning Disabilities

7.4 In line with key objectives of NN development, service provision has been agreed to meet the identified local need and proposes to create/further develop the following facilities within Porth Plaza Hub:

- A single point of access for community members to gain Information, Advice and Guidance;
- An enhanced library facility, including a comfortable seating area, children's area and computer access;
- To continue to facilitate a privately run childcare provision;
- Additional community space for meetings and events;
- Additional space for targeted service delivery including activities for 50+;
- Fit for purpose space for youth provision;
- Employment Pathway Support and access to adult community learning provision;
- Accessible Disabled toilets and changing facilities for adults.

In addition, consultation has taken place under the Porth Town Centre Strategy, with the views of community members being taken into account.

- 7.5 Council officers will work with third sector partners who will be able to deliver their services from the hub if they wish to do so including provision of advice, training and activities. This hub development received the support of Citizens Advice and the Department of Work and Pensions.
- 7.6 Work is due to commence on the internal re-fit in January and it is planned to be complete by the end of March.
- 7.7 Funding for Community Coordinator has been identified and this will be a valuable addition to the team at the hub enabling the development of an active neighbourhood network.

### **Llys Cadwyn**

- 7.8 The Council's flagship development at Taff Vale will include the development of Llys Cadwyn hub. This will consist of a new library built across 2 floors with a café and the Council's One4All service based on the ground floor alongside the usual range of library services, community rooms and one to one consultation rooms that can be used by partners. There will also be an exhibition area that will accommodate displays of work by local artists and community groups.
- 7.9 There will be a dedicated craft area for children and the building will benefit from the latest in digital technology including interactive tables and virtual headsets that will allow access to the latest learning opportunities.
- 7.10 An enhanced and expanded Reference and Local Studies service will be available on the first floor with a dedicated IT/Education room, a multi-function leisure suite and spin-room. The second floor will be dedicated to a gym. Access will be available to the largest community room, café and leisure facilities outside of core library hours. An exhibition area will be available

### **Cynon Linc (Aberdare)**

- 7.11 **Cynon Linc (North Cynon)** is based at Aberdare (in the former St.Mair's Day Centre). The building was transferred to Age Connect Morgannwg in 2018 as part of an asset transfer after the closure of the Day Centre. This model reflects the approach taken in Yr Hwb in so far as it will be a third sector-led development with favourable terms and conditions that should enable the third sector organisation to lead developments for a secure position. The building is currently closed for renovation, with a few discrete services remaining, such as Information, Advice and Assistance and Nail Cutting sessions, rooms remain available for hire.
- 7.12 ACM's proposal to transform the existing day centre for over 50 years olds into an intergenerational community hub with co-located G.P surgery and childcare was innovative and made better use of a Council facility and mirrored the Councils developing Community Hub/Zone and Neighbourhood Network Model. In order to carry out the



capital development works on the building, which on completion, (during 2020/21), aims to deliver:

- A community hub accessible to people of all ages, from anywhere not just within RCT;
- Age Connect Morgannwg operational base;
- Day Nursery provision for babies and children up to the age of 5, delivered by The Fern Partnership (Community Interest Company);
- Primary Care services via the Maendy Practice;
- A 'meet and greet' reception service to ensure visitors and callers to the centre feel welcome and are able to access the service they need;
- A Community Information and Advice Hub that will include surgery days with local third sector organisations and community groups;
- An Education Room suitable for use by the whole community which will include art classes, IT classes, adult learning, group activities and large meeting space;
- A Sensory and Therapies Room for use by people with cognitive impairment
- A Dementia Cafe and activities that will offer support to carers;
- Affordable meals that cater for all dietary requirements, throughout the day and evening including food to go via snack outlets;
- Modern, well equipped space for community organisations to run activities and rooms for hire for meetings, parties and events;
- Nail Cutting Clinic.

### **Treorchy cultural hub**

7.13 In line with the Council approach of developing hubs that are appropriate to specific areas, the intention is to establish a cultural hub at Treorchy taking advantage of the fact that it has two significant cultural assets in close proximity - the Park and Dare Theatre and the Treorchy Area Library that holds the local studies collection for the Rhondda Valley. Plans for this are at an early stage of development and will not be effected until the next financial year. In the meantime the theatre is engaging in the Arts Council of Wales programme Designing Public Value with Purpose which includes developing its relationship with community groups, and businesses in the area so that it can widen participation in the arts and enhance its community engagement. A mapping exercise of the area has been undertaken and staff are working closely with colleagues in Regeneration to ensure that any developments enhance proposals to support town centre regeneration.

## **8. CHALLENGES**

- 8.1 Identifying community partners who are able to become third sector anchors is not always easy while developing these relationships to a point where an asset can be transferred and a hub established can take a considerable amount of time.
- 8.2 Sustainability is an issue for third sector partners who are dependent on external grant funding and the ability to generate revenue through income. It is unlikely that the hubs will be totally independent of the need for some Council support in the form of funding.

- 8.3 Although there are tangible achievements that can be identified already in respect of the two hubs that are currently open, it will be important to evidence the impact of community hubs and neighbourhood networks on the early intervention and prevention agenda and other expected outcomes if they are to be sustained over the longer term. Data Cymru have been supporting the PSB to develop an evaluation framework but this is yet to be finalised. In the meantime, colleagues who are currently undergoing the Mercury management training have also been asked to research methods for evaluating the impact of community hubs from good practice identified elsewhere.
- 8.4 Collaboration and co-production takes considerable thought, effort, understanding and the building of trust with partners which takes time. It is cannot be accomplished quickly if it is to be meaningful.

## 9. EQUALITY OR DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no equality or diversity implications arising from this report.

## 10. CONSULTATION

- 10.1 In relation to the development of **Yr Hwb** in Ferndale, some consultation had been undertaken by Cwm Taf PSB in the form of a facilitated workshop attended by 60 residents of the Rhondda Fach. The feedback from the event identified that the greatest strength was undoubtedly the community spirit and how people supported each other. Many residents highlighted the perceived loss of local services and amenities as a key thing they would change. Subsequently, a four week focussed consultation was undertaken from the 19<sup>th</sup> February to 19<sup>th</sup> March 2018 focussed on the proposal of developing a hub at the former Ferndale Infant school by co-locating the library with Fern Partnership's proposed childcare provision. The consultation used a range of methods including a questionnaire, four drop-in engagement events, an email to all 1344 library users and promotion through the Older Persons Advisory Group. The proposal received overwhelming support from the respondents.
- 10.2 Community Matters events have been held focussing on getting the community connected and to start identifying the skills and experience of local residents; while a series of informal events have been on-going advertised via posters at local shops, social media and the Our Cwm Taf website.
- 10.3 Cwm Taf Public Service Board have an Information, Communication and Involvement Group, chaired by Interlink, to ensure community groups and individuals voices continue to be heard.
- 10.4 There are regular Neighbourhood Network Steering Group meetings held, led by the Fern partnership as the anchor organisation. The key theme at present is communication – how best to share activity in the Rhondda Fach and the plans for local events going forward.
- 10.5 Consultation on the closure of **Mountain Ash Day** Centre and relocation of the library took place between 26<sup>th</sup> February and 26<sup>th</sup> March 2018. Further consultation was undertaken with residents on the proposed design of the building and the type of provision they would like to see there. Previously library customers had identified

improvements they would like to see in library provision through the Library Customer Survey 2016 and Keep in Touch Days.

- 10.6 Consultation on developments in **Porth** was undertaken as part of a six week Porth Town Centre Strategy Consultation that took place between 29<sup>th</sup> October and 10<sup>th</sup> December 2018. The approach taken included a questionnaire and face to face engagement. The Town Centre Strategy identified the site occupied by the Alec Jones Day Centre as having the potential to accommodate a new Transport Hub. In developing Porth Plaza into a Community Hub, it was proposed to relocate the services currently provided by Alec Jones Day Centre to the new Community Hub. Respondents were asked what they would do if the Day Centre activities were to transfer to Porth Plaza. 92% of service users responded to this question stating that they would attend the new Community Hub and nobody stated that they would stop attending the activities. Therefore, the Porth Plaza Hub will have a crucial role in preventing social isolation for the current day centre users.
- 10.7 **Llys Cadwyn** - In January 2016 views on the preferred future uses of the Taff Vale site were sought from local residents and businesses via a questionnaire that was distributed throughout the town and online. 1,551 respondents completed the questionnaire and the main preferred uses for the site were retail and restaurants with a selection of other uses in the middle range including public services, hotel, bars and gym.
- 10.8 In addition to the public consultation outlined above, library customers have indicated through the customer survey implemented in April 2016 and suggestions that have been submitted to the Area Librarian, that access to refreshments on-site would be welcomed while feedback throughout the year relating to IT provision has indicated that improvements made to PC hardware would be welcomed. As the project has developed there has been on-going consultation with residents, local schools and businesses and Elected Members.
- 10.9 **Cynon Linc** - Age Connects Morganwg undertook consultations in relation to the development following Cabinet approval, to transfer the asset on a 99 year lease, in September 2017.  
<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/Cabinet/2017/09/19/Reports/AgendaItem6Proposaltoapproveinprinciplea99yearleaseholdtransferofStMairsDayCentreAberdaretoAgeConnectsMorgannwg.pdf>

## **11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The development of Yr Hwb in Ferndale required the major redevelopment of a former infant school owned by the Council. The building has been leased to Fern Partnership as the third sector anchor organisation and this has enabled them to access significant external funding that otherwise would not have been available to the Council. In addition to the building, the Council has made a capital contribution of approximately £300k. This was used as a match funding contribution and has enabled additional funding from a number of sources:
- Pen Y Cymoedd Windfarm (both capital and revenue);
  - Welsh Government Communities Facilities Programme;
  - WCVS;
  - Integrated Care Fund (ICF);

- MALD (for the library only).

11.2 In total, the capital scheme cost nearly £800k.

11.3 **Canolfan Pennar** attracted investment of £650k from the Council.

11.4 **Porth Plaza** will be a mixture of Council capital funding and grant funding from 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Community Learning Centres Fund and ICF.

11.5 **Llys Cadwyn** will be a £6.2 million development comprising of £300,000 MALD funding and £5.9 million Prudential borrowing.

11.6 The funding package for **Cynon Linc** is in the process of being developed with applications for funding waiting for confirmation.

## 12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## 13. LINKS TO WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES

13.1 This proposal is consistent with the sustainable approach promoted by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act through the five ways of working:

- Long-term – each community zone will seek to achieve long term sustainable change in their community;
- Prevention – this approach is a key element of the PSB and both Councils' increased emphasis on early intervention and prevention;
- Integration – this proposal contributes to a range of strategic priorities in an integrated and coherent approach;
- Collaboration – intrinsic to this approach is collaboration with other public services and the third sector;
- Involvement – communities will be involved through a different approach to engagement and co-production;

13.2 This proposal makes a direct contribution to the seven national well-being goals, in particular a Prosperous Wales, a Resilient Wales, a Healthier Wales and a Wales of Cohesive Communities.

## 14. CONCLUSION

14.1 Significant developments have taken place in respect of developing community hubs in Rhondda Cynon Taf over the past year. There remains considerable work to be done in collaboration with partners to develop new community hubs and embed the wider neighbourhood network approach to providing services that communities want and that are co-produced with them.

14.2 It is currently too early to measure the impact of these changes on the early intervention and prevention agenda and the development of an appropriate framework is being prioritised.

