



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021-22

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP REPORT

9th DECEMBER 2021

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee with the findings and recommendations agreed by the Scrutiny Working Group at its final meeting held on the 16th November 2021;
- 1.2 The Working Group was established to deal with 'The development of future transportation infrastructure in Rhondda Cynon Taf' following the Notice of Motion considered by Council at its meeting held on the [18th September 2019](#).
- 1.3 For Members to ratify the recommendations for final presentation to Cabinet.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members endorse the conclusions and recommendations of the Working Group as set out at paragraph 6.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 18th September 2019 Council considered the Notice of Motion standing in the names of County Borough Councillors G.Davies, K.Morgan, P.Jarman, D.Grehan, H.Fychan, J.Williams, A.Cox, D.Macey, J.Cullwick, J.Davies, M.Weaver, S.Rees Owen, L.Jones E.Stephens E,Griffiths, E,Webster, S.M. Evans, and A. Chapman.

"With the advent of the approved Metro in 2022; coupled with the aspirations as set out in the Council's proposed Tourism strategy the time is now right to push for future rail development in the County.

This Council therefore calls on the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Joint Cabinet and Transport for Wales to commit to extending the Aberdare passenger line to Hirwaun subject to full consultation with the public and other stakeholders on the location of the station so that it is accessible and fully utilised.

This Council further calls on the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Joint Cabinet and Transport for Wales to also extend the Treherbert line to Tynnewydd. subject to its inclusion in the reviewed RCT Local Development Plan.

- 3.2. At the Council meeting and in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure 12.7 the mover of the motion moved an alteration to the Motion to include:

“And that the matter be referred to the Council’s Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration, with a widening of the Motion to include the wider County Borough footprint”.

- 3.3 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed that a Working Group would be established to consider the Notice of Motion. The Working Group Members consisted of County Borough Councillors L M Adams (Chair), H Boggis, J Bonetto, G Caple, A Cox, M Griffiths, W Jones and L Walker. The Working Group was also privileged to have both County Borough Councillors G R Davies and K Morgan, initial mover and seconder to the Council’s Notice of Motion as key stakeholders/observers to assist the Working Group’s review.
- 3.4 At its inaugural meeting on the 25th November 2019, the Working Group agreed the scope of its work, its terms of reference and received a comprehensive Power Point presentation from Transport for Wales. (Members noted that since the terms of reference had been agreed, the Revised Local Development Plan (RLDP) Members Steering Group had been established which would provide an effective mechanism for discussion and consultation between Members and LDP officers on the content of the revised Plan).
- 3.5 The Working Group learned that as part of the Wales-wide rail franchise, Transport for Wales (TfW) (a wholly owned arms-length company of Welsh Government) had let the 15-year rail franchise to Keolis Amey, operating as Transport for Wales Rail Services. The initial investment secured full electrification of the Valley lines within Rhondda Cynon Taf (and to Merthyr) together with new rolling stock. Once complete, high frequency fast trains will run four times an hour each way on the lines north of Pontypridd and 12 times an hour each way between Cardiff and Pontypridd, with upgrades to stations and facilities also being delivered.
- 3.6 With information provided around the range of complimentary improvements to stations with potential for additional stations and park and ride opportunities as well as specific projects such as a new rail depot to be developed at Taffs Well which would also accommodate the control centre for these rail services, Members agreed that Metro must be more than rail and would need to integrate all forms of transport to create a comprehensive, joined-up and coordinated network of routes and services across; rail, tram, bus, cycling, walking, whilst promoting more sustainable ways of fuelling private cars, freight and service vehicles.
- 3.7 In order to progress its considerations as to how future rail and transport infrastructure and services could develop and build on the early stages of implementation of the South Wales Metro in Rhondda Cynon Taf, the Working Group agreed to seek submissions from local Members and stakeholders. This would enable the Working Group to explore the concerns, points and questions raised further during the course of their work.
- 3.8 The Working Group sought views on a range of proposals such as:

- How the Council maximises opportunities to add value to current Metro investments across RCT
 - Resident and stakeholder views on improving the reach and efficiency of our transport network and services for all modes of travel, especially sustainable transport solutions, in order to improve the social and economic well-being of the County Borough and
 - How such proposals might compliment and contribute towards the impending LDP review by the Council and the development of a Strategic Development Plan for the region.
- 3.9 Eight submissions were received in total from Local Members and other stakeholders such as Community Councils and the Rhondda Tunnel Society, which were due to be considered and discussed at its second meeting in early 2020.
- 3.10 On the 23rd March 2020, and in response to measures implemented by the UK and Welsh Governments as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council's committee meetings were temporarily suspended. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee undertook a more streamlined approach towards its work programme and in effect undertook its role to identify the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant that all Scrutiny working groups were suspended to allow officers to concentrate their time on business-critical matters.

4. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP: CALL FOR EVIDENCE

- 4.1 On the 7th July 2021, the Working Group received a report from the Service Director Frontline Services which presented the summary of the submissions received in response to the call for evidence (as set out below) and the subsequent response of the Council to each individual submission (attached at Appendix 1):

Councillor G. Caple – Local Member for Porth
 Councillor G. Thomas – Local Member for Rhigos
 Councillors D. R. Bevan & L. M. Adams – Local Members for Tylorstown
 Councillors G. R. Davies & W. Jones – Local Members for Treherbert
 Hirwaun & Penderyn Community Council
 Rhondda Tunnel Society
 Welcome to Our Woods/Create Your Own Space
 Ynysybwl & Coed Y Cwm Community Council

- 4.2 Members considered the responses to individual, specific queries raised such as the extension of the rail line from Treherbert to Tynwydd to capitalise on the benefits of the improved services as well as the 'wider County Borough footprint' which had been moved as an alteration to the original Notice of Motion. They also considered the wider transport context such as legislative, environmental and economic factors and also reflected on the developments that have taken place since the original call for evidence in 2020.
- 4.3 The Working Group acknowledged that a number of WG funded studies have potentially significant impacts for RCT are also progressing via the CCR Transport Authority and TfW with regard to the North West Transport Corridor project from Cardiff into RCT, (details of which had been presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the [15th June 2021](#)), extending passenger rail services beyond Aberdare to Hirwaun, Strategic rail-based park and ride proposals to serve the eastern end of the A473 corridor near Upper Boat and improving regional east-

west transport connectivity across the mid-valleys (i.e. Usk – Pontypool – Newbridge – Ystrad Mynach – Abercynon – Pontypridd – Pontyclun – Bridgend – Porthcawl).

- 4.4 The North West Transport Corridor Cardiff Project, a £300 plus million scheme which was commissioned in July 2019 has now identified short and long-term public transport options from Pontyclun, Talbot Green, Llantrisant, Beddau, Creigiau and Plasdwr towards Cardiff City Centre. The short-term interventions will consider Bus Rapid Transit and bus priority measures, alongside active travel, to alleviate bottlenecks on the existing network between RCT and Cardiff. The longer-term measures will focus on rail-based options mainly utilising former mineral lines. It is possible that the wider economic benefits could extend northwards into the Rhondda Valley and Gilfach Goch areas as the creation of new employment in Talbot Green and planned reduction in journey times to/from Cardiff will offer residents in these communities with improved access to new jobs, training and learning opportunities.
- 4.5 The Working Group considered that as a number of studies are being undertaken by TfW, via the Cardiff Capital Region Transport Authority it would be timely to consider the re-evaluation of plans, feasibility reports and costs for the Council's pipeline of road schemes to feed into the Welsh Government review of road schemes and which could be reported to Scrutiny in due course.
- 4.6 On a local level, RCT is also developing and delivering proposals to complement the Metro such as the investment in Porth Transport Hub, the new £100m rail depot at Taffs Well, and the options being explored with Transport for Wales to develop a new railway station that serves Treforest Industrial Estate. It is also promoting its active travel and in partnership with a number of organisations and bodies such as Sustrans and Public Health Wales, is raising awareness of the health, economic and environmental benefits of cycling and walking. The Council recently undertook a public engagement exercise into its future Active Travel plans which has informed the required formal consultation (now underway) and this will establish the aspirations for investment in Active Travel over the next 15 years. The updated proposals will be submitted to Welsh Government during December 2021. The 695 responses to the initial consultation were reported to Cabinet on the [17th June 2021](#)
- 4.7 It was noted that Welsh Government has initiated a review of all road schemes under the Climate Change agenda including projects that are subject to the Welsh Government's Business Case Process. Aspirations for a phased road scheme in the Rhondda Fach in the form of a 3 section extension of the Rhondda Fach Relief Road to Ferndale, to the Salisbury Hotel to Maerdy and link from Maerdy to the Heads of the Valleys would be subject to the legislation and policies governing climate change and alternative measures that will improve public transport provision along the Rhondda Fach.
- 4.8 The Working Group acknowledged that opportunities to extend the rail line towards Tower Colliery, which would improve connectivity with Zip World, are being considered without prejudicing extensions further west beyond those areas in the future.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Members recognised that that the essence of the Notice of Motion needed to be considered in the wider context and against progress of the new Welsh Transport Strategy; Llwybr Newydd, South Wales Metro, WG funded studies and many local projects.

- 5.2 Whilst considering the eight submissions and key queries raised by local Members and stakeholders, Members noted the benefits of undertaking further feasibility studies and analysis of each submission to understand any potential financial costs which will only become known following more detailed study and analysis.
- 5.3 Members proposed that, in view of the wider remit of the working group a report is presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to demonstrate that the broader scope has been captured.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Members proposed the following recommendations:

- The Working Group acknowledges that the integrated transport map of South Wales is swiftly changing and evolving;
- As a result, the Working Group recommends that the Council/ And RTA (Regional Transport Authority) reviews all potential infrastructure, including rapid transport and active travel in the wider context of the revised LDP;
- This Working Group recommends that all pipe-line projects are fully evaluated, and that priority is given to integrated public transport to support greener means of travel across the region;
- The Working Group also recommended consideration continues to be provided to the extension of the Rhondda Fach Relief Road, while recognising that the recent 'moratorium' by Welsh Government upon the funding of future highway developments would prevent progress of this scheme into reality, the development of enhanced integrated transport networks, should be a key objective in improving the economic well-being of residents.
- When considering the wider development of transport infrastructure in future years, in the context of tackling climate change, the Working Group was of the view that selected roads schemes remain important and justified, where they support economic growth and compliment wider transport behavioural change being undertaken.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 No equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on this report, however, creating sustainable communities, transport and long- term employment opportunities are of benefit to all RCT residents regardless of background.

8. CONSULTATION

8.1 Consultation was undertaken with the stakeholders and local Members who responded to the call for evidence as set out in the submissions at Appendix A.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no financial implications directly associated with this report, but detailed consideration of the capital and revenue implications will be required in order to inform a preferred strategy. It should be noted that many of the submissions set out in Appendix 1 will have a financial implication for the Council. However, at this stage, the potential financial cost will only become known following more detailed study and analysis of each submission.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

11. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE AND NATIONAL AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT

- 11.1 Supporting the development of a more sustainable transport solution will allow the Council to meet its stated objectives covering health and prosperity set out in the Council's Single Integrated Plan and emerging Corporate Plan. For example, the planned, new public transport and active travel proposals will help address air quality and congestion issues and improve connectivity and access to new employment opportunities.
- 11.2 Many of the submissions in Appendix 1 will also meet a number of the goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. For example, a prosperous Wales, a more equal Wales, a healthier Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972
as amended by
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
9th DECEMBER 2021

List of Background Papers

Report of the Service Director Democratic Services & Communication

Item - Overview & Scrutiny Working Group- The Development of Future Transport
Infrastructure in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Freestanding Matter

