

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM INCLUDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

Final Version – November 2023

Please refer to the current Equality Impact Assessment guidance when completing this document. If you would like further guidance please contact the Diversity and Inclusion Team on 01443 444529.

An equality impact assessment **must** be undertaken at the outset of any proposal to ensure robust evidence is considered in decision making. This documentation will support the Council in making informed, effective and fair decisions whilst ensuring compliance with a range of relevant legislation, including:

- Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010.

This document will also contribute towards our duties to create a More Equal Wales within the

- Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015.

The [‘A More Equal Wales – Mapping Duties’](#) guide highlights the alignment of our duties in respect of the above-mentioned legislation.

SECTION 1 – PROPOSAL DETAILS

Lead Officer: Emma Halford, Regeneration Project Officer

Service Director: Derek James

Service Area: Prosperity and Development

Date: 28.11.2023

1.a) What are you assessing for impact?

Strategy/Plan	Service Re-Model/Discontinuation of Service	Policy/Procedure	Practice	Information/Position Statement
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.b) What is the name of the proposal?

Aberdare Town Centre Strategy

1.c) Please provide an overview of the proposal providing any supporting links to reports or documents.

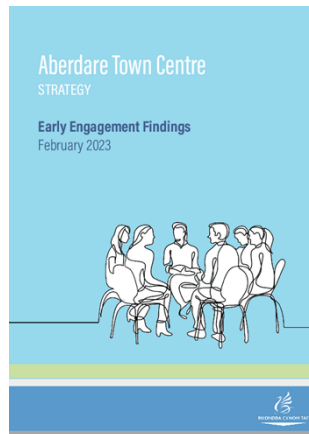
The principal town of Aberdare acts as the focal point for numerous communities within northern RCT. However, the town centre has faced considerable challenges in recent years including the continued growth of online shopping, the lasting impact of COVID-19 and the current cost of living crisis.

Significant investment, in excess of £100m to-date, within the town has supported the delivery of several key projects delivering new high-quality leisure, educational and light-industrial facilities. However, continued investment is vital if the town is to fully maximise opportunities associated with its proximity to nearby tourism attractions, strong history and heritage and resilient business and local community. It is therefore essential that all future investment is delivered via a co-ordinated and 'joined-up' approach to maximise potential benefits and ensure a clear contribution is made to establishing Aberdare Town Centre as a great place to live, work and visit.

A Town Centre Strategy has been prepared to act as a central framework through which coordination of future investment within the town centre can be delivered. It includes a series of investment themes from which potential projects may be identified to enable Aberdare Town Centre to strengthen its identity as a great place to live, work and visit. These themes respond to the range of challenges and opportunities identified via extensive early engagement with key stakeholder groups and robust socio-economic analysis.

Early engagement, with key stakeholder groups, was undertaken to inform the development of the Town Centre Strategy from November 2022 to February 2023 and consisted of the following:

- A series of in-person workshops with local councillors, RCTCBC staff, the Our Aberdare BID Board and local primary and secondary school children. Tasks undertaken included the creation of a SWOT analysis of the town, prioritisation of a series of suggested investment themes and discussions around what more could be done to promote the Welsh language within the town.
- An online survey asked respondents to identify evident strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats within the town and to prioritise a series of investment themes. The survey also included key questions regarding equality and diversity and asked respondents to consider how well the Welsh Language is currently promoted within the town centre and whether more could be done to improve this.
- Findings from this early engagement can be found in the Early Engagement Findings Report, embedded below. Also embedded below is the Formal Consultation Findings Report, Aberdare Town Centre Strategy and Cabinet Report. Click on the image to access the document.



Let's Talk Aberdare - Aberdare Town Centre Strategy 2023

- Greater flexibility to new ideas.
- Increasing use of active travel options and build on the town's green credentials.
- Increased promotion of the local tourism offer together with linking in to regional and national tourism.
- Utilise specialist buildings to provide unique starts.
- Create a clear "front door for investment" - business from elsewhere aren't here where to go to ask about opportunities that are available? There is a need to connect out of town businesses with available accommodation/opportunities etc.

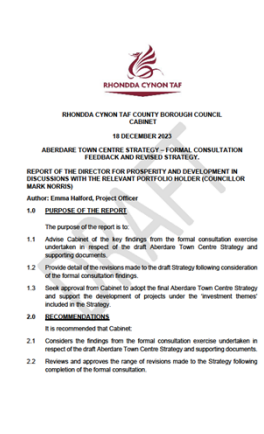
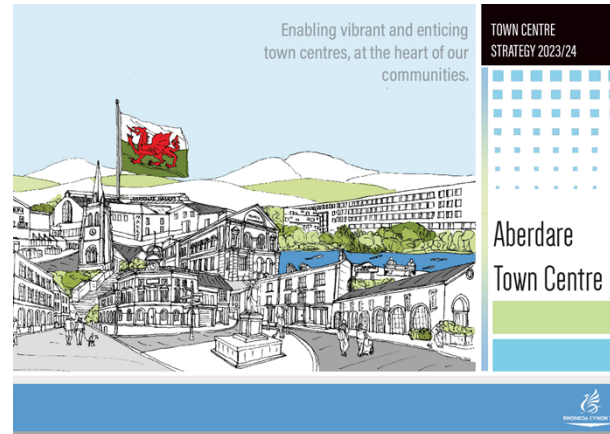
Strong support for "diversifying the offer" and building on the growing programme of events held locally:

- Need for different offer for different generations identified, particularly more things for the younger generation.
- Opportunity to build on recent successful events to establish a strong annual programme.
- More activity needed on the streets when the town centre, maybe by outdoor markets/activities.
- Support for introducing more of a unique offer, e.g niche businesses, into the town centre where large retailers have vacated.
- Strong support for supporting grassroots local entrepreneurship programmes.
- Opportunities associated with the Llandelilo coming to HCT in 2024 to be utilised.
- Promotion of the Welsh language identified as a key opportunity.

Strong support for collaboration and partnership working, with a focus on the strong existing networks of community groups already doing great work:

- Need identified for a joined-up approach where the Council acts in a facilitation/enabling role.
- Discussions had about the challenges that groups face and encouragement with finding local groups to join with similar interests to form.
- Suggestion of a bigger community presence on the high street to create a space where people can go to find out about activities in and around the town centre, available grants/funding, how to book community facilities, local groups to join etc.
- Opportunity to strengthen links with local schools and colleges.
- Strongly committed to creative people equity that is available for spaces to come together and start projects, exhibit, make etc. An idea/creative hub?

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Following completion of this early engagement, together with consideration of the findings, a Strategy was produced. This Strategy was developed by the Council's Regeneration team and took account of the range of challenges and opportunities identified in collaboration with the local and wider community, via early engagement, and provided detail of a series of proposed investment themes. Following submission of the Strategy to Cabinet in June 2023, a phase of formal public consultation was undertaken from early August to the end of September 2023. A range of methods were used to consult with the local and wider community including:

- An online survey with interactive quick polls, made available on the RCT Let's Talk website. Digital copies of the Strategy and supporting documents were also made available online in both Welsh and English.
- A series of in-person events at various locations in and around the town centre where paper copies of the survey, Strategy and supporting documents were available to take away.

- Leaflets and posters were delivered to businesses and organisations within the town centre to promote the consultation.
- A physical exhibition, held at Aberdare Library, with detailed information about the development of the Strategy and previous early engagement. Paper copies of the Strategy, online survey and supporting documents were available for collection.
- Social media posts and emails were also published throughout the consultation to promote all methods of consultation.

Overview of key findings:

- 142 survey responses were received, with a further 17 responses to the “Quick Poll” function on the website.
- 63.8% said that the strategy accurately describes the town’s strengths.
- 80.4% said that the strategy accurately describes the town’s key threats and challenges.
- 69.3% agreed with the different opportunities that could be explored in and around the Town Centre.
- 86.4% of respondents ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ with the strategy’s overall vision for Aberdare town centre.
- A high majority of respondents ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ with the strategy’s five main strategic objectives.
- More than 77.5% of respondents supported each of the strategy’s investment themes.
- 17 respondents took part in Poll 1 on the Let’s Talk website. 64.7% agreed that the strategy accurately captures the range of key opportunities and challenges facing Aberdare town centre.
- 30 young people from 4 schools took part overall.
- 65.5% of young people surveyed, agreed that the Strategy accurately described the town’s strengths.
- The majority of young people strongly agreed or agreed with the strategic objectives.
- The majority of young people surveyed, supported the investment themes.

Details of the findings from the formal consultation can be found in the report embedded above.

Following completion of the formal consultation, the findings were considered carefully, and revisions were made to the Strategy. Key revisions include (but are not limited to):

- Increased specificity about the type of tourism referred to in the strategy. Adventure tourism was identified as a key opportunity together with building on the town’s green credentials and making more of the opportunities to enjoy the natural landscape. Therefore, these aspects have been strengthened in the strategy.
- More acknowledgement of the need to support and encourage the Welsh Language through locally led initiatives, including how the younger generation can get involved particularly given that they are learning the language at school.
- Strengthen focus on opportunities for new development in and around the ‘Market Quarter’, building on the considerable asset that the market represents to the town. This includes identification of opportunities to increase support for small businesses/start-ups.

- Integrate consideration of how greater representation of under-represented ethnic groups is facilitated on the Highstreet.
- Revision of the wording describing Aberdare as an accessible town. Whilst this was intended to refer to the flatter topography surrounding Aberdare Town Centre, the use of language isn't clear. Clear concerns about the accessibility for those with disabilities were identified during the formal consultation and these will be considered during project development and implementation.
- Inclusion of reference to the nearby Wetlands and the great work that the group there have been doing. Identification of this work could tie into other initiatives mentioned in the strategy.
- Increase acknowledgement of the opportunity to utilise vacant shop windows to promote the town's offer and tell the story of Aberdare.
- As part of the investment theme focused on routes and connections, reference to connections to the new Robertstown units has been included due to poor existing pedestrian connections identified.
- Strengthening the description of the location of the town centre, including the outstanding natural landscape, and acknowledge the considerable strength and opportunity this presents.
- Inclusion of reference to the existing strong network of local groups and organisation in the Strategy which includes identification of the considerable strength that this network presents.
- Acknowledgement of the recent positive momentum in the town including the range of events and activities.

Please see the following cabinet report for full details of how the Strategy was revised following the formal consultation.

1.d) Please outline where delivery of this proposal is affected by legislation or other drivers such as code of practice.

The Aberdare Town Centre Strategy has been developed in accordance with the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024 'Making a Difference' which visualises its town centres as vibrant, thriving places where people wish to live, work and socialise. It also aligns with Welsh Government's 'Town Centres First' approach, aimed at putting the health of town centres at the heart of the decisions taken by the public sector, businesses and communities.

Future development/investment delivered under the series of proposed 'Investment Themes' contained within the strategy, will also contribute to the goals of the Well Being of Future Generations Act. In particular, it addresses improvement of the economic and environmental well-being of Wales; the delivery of a prosperous Wales; a more resilient Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

1.e) Please outline who this proposal affects:

- Service users
- Employees
- Wider community

SECTION 2 – SCREENING TEST – IS A FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT REQUIRED?

Screening is used to determine whether the initiative has positive, negative or neutral impacts upon protected groups. Where negative impacts are identified for protected groups then a full Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Please provide as much detail as possible of how the proposal will impact on the following groups, this may not necessarily be negative, but may impact on a group with a particular characteristic in a specific way.

Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and foster good relations between different groups. Please take an intersectional approach in recognising an individual may have more than one protected characteristic.

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Age (<i>Specific age groups i.e. young people or older people</i>)	Neutral (Not possible to say at this stage)	<p>As part of a phase of early, informal engagement with the local and wider community 614 people responded to an online survey titled “Aberdare town Centre: What do you think?”. Of the 614 respondents, 605 chose to provide personal information about their age, gender and national identity.</p> <p>In relation to age, there was broadly even representation across most of the age categories (please see Early Engagement Findings Report). This suggests that the engagement methods/techniques implemented were appropriate for the majority of age groups. However, there was a more limited response from those in the 16-24 and 75+ age groups. Additional workshops were delivered during February 2023 with primary and secondary school students.</p> <p>Findings from early engagement with a wide and diverse range of internal and external stakeholders</p>	<p>Early Engagement Findings Report.</p> <p>Formal Consultation Findings Report</p> <p>Additionally, further evidence will be explored when specific projects and interventions, related to the proposed Investment Themes are taken through the development and consultation process.</p> <p>Age Specific Data: RCT Between the last two census, the average (median) age of RCT increased by 1 year from 40 to 41 years of age.</p> <p>RCT had a slightly lower average</p>

		<p>highlight a number of existing challenges and opportunities, evident within the town centre, for different age groups.</p> <p>For the older generation, these include: Reduced accessibility in particular areas of the town, which is compounded by inappropriate parking blocking pedestrian routes, within the town centre. Key routes to and from the town could be improved because several are not currently accessible to all. Public transport could be improved. Traffic could be improved, for example, pedestrian safety. The presence of anti-social behaviour Lack of safe spaces Enhancement of public conveniences</p> <p>For the younger generation, these include: Unlit pedestrian routes to and from the town centre resulting in unsafe spots. Lack of free/affordable things for young people to do contributing to anti-social behaviour issues. Reduced amount of local work experience/job opportunities. Opportunities to support biodiversity/sustainable initiatives within the town centre. Closure of youth clubs has meant young people gather within the town centre.</p> <p>Using the findings from this early engagement work, along with a spatial and demographic baseline analysis, a series of investment themes are proposed within the Strategy. Investment delivered under these themes will contribute to achieving the Strategy's central vision to:</p> <p><i>“build upon Aberdare’s unique heritage and strategic location to create a more vibrant,</i></p>	<p>age than Wales as a whole (at 42 years).</p> <p>The number of people aged 65 to 74 years rose by just over 4,000 (an increase of 18.3%), while the number of residents between 35 and 49 years fell by around 4,800 (10%).</p> <p>The total population in the Aberdare Settlement Area is 31,635 of which 48.8% are male and 51.2% are female (as of May 2023).</p> <p>There are 5,692 individuals aged between 0 and 15 in the Aberdare Settlement area which equates to 18% of the Aberdare Settlement Area population (Welsh Average is 17.6%).</p> <p>The working population in the Aberdare Settlement area is 19,460 which equates to 61.5% of the Aberdare Settlement Area (Welsh Average if 61.1%).</p> <p>Also, 6,483 individuals are aged 65+ in the Aberdare Settlement Area.</p> <p>During the development of individual projects Regeneration officers will seek to collaborate with the appropriate internal and external stakeholders.</p>
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		<p><i>dynamic and attractive destination for both local residents and visitors to the area.”</i></p> <p>Having been shaped by early engagement with a wide range of stakeholders the Strategy’s investment themes respond directly to the needs of local residents and town centre users.</p> <p>The following investment themes seek to address the age-related challenges and opportunities, outlined above, for both older and younger users of the town centre.</p> <p>Theme 1: Redevelopment and re-use of existing underutilised, vacant or derelict buildings to accommodate a new, diverse offering.</p> <p>The redevelopment and re-use of currently vacant or under-utilised properties/land, within the Town Centre, will create new opportunities to diversify the town’s offering which may include more facilities for young people. Initiatives of this type will be developed via collaborative, partnership approaches to enable local businesses to satisfy local demand and ensure that proposed solutions adequately address existing challenges for different age groups.</p> <p>Redevelopment projects, delivered under this theme, will be developed with accessibility in mind to ensure that all town centre users can benefit from future investment. Additionally, a greater variety of businesses located within the town centres, including healthcare, lifestyle and recreational amenities, may have positive benefits for all due the easily accessible nature of the town centre, via good public transport links (bus/rail/road), making it easier for local people to access key services.</p>	
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		<p>In order to mitigate any negative impacts that such projects may have on different age groups, it will be important that a diverse range of stakeholders are consulted during project development and design to ensure that the resultant development provides positive benefits for all. Specific needs, views and ideas related to projects will be gathered during the formal consultation.</p> <p>Theme 2: Bringing the history and heritage of Aberdare to life.</p> <p>Projects and initiatives delivered under this theme will aim to bring Aberdare's history and heritage to life, make the town's heritage and offering more visible and strengthen the conservation area.</p> <p>Positive impacts from such initiatives for different age groups may include:</p> <p>Opportunities for the older generation to share stories and histories with local people via walking tours and storytelling projects that bring the town's history to life. Such initiatives will bring people of all ages together to learn about the town's heritage and will be developed collaboratively to ensure that the needs of all age groups are considered, including digital and physical content etc. Such projects will also create opportunities for town centre users, of different ages, to interact and share histories to strengthen the town's overall identity and build on existing positive collaborative work, at the local level.</p> <p>Other initiatives proposed to be explored, under this theme, include the strengthening of enforcement of conservation area requirements to ensure that property owners undertake physical and aesthetic improvements that positively contribute to the town's overall appearance. Such improvements will contribute to ensuring that the</p>	
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		<p>town centre is safe and accessible for all age groups.</p> <p>Another focus will be improvement of key gateways to the town to enhance the visitor arrival experience and make the town's offer more visible. Such initiatives will be developed in collaboration with the local community to ensure that any proposed improvements are suitable to the needs of different age groups.</p> <p>Theme 3: Enhancing the visitor experience and building on the existing and growing tourism offer.</p> <p>Projects delivered under this theme will provide enhanced visitor infrastructure within Aberdare Town Centre to ensure that visitors are aware of the full range of attractions and activities on offer. Key positive impacts, resulting from projects delivered under this theme, include increased awareness of what is on offer locally. This may result in more people, of different ages, utilising affordable recreational and leisure opportunities which they may otherwise not know about. To realise such benefits, it will be essential that a range of marketing techniques is utilised, including both digital and physical formats, to ensure that everyone is able to access marketing and promotional material easily.</p> <p>Theme 4: Improvement/promotion of active travel and enhanced wayfinding signage.</p> <p>Key proposed deliverables include the improvement and promotion of key active travel routes in and around the town centre combined with provision of enhanced wayfinding signage. Such improvements have the potential to encourage all age groups to lead a more active and healthier lifestyle whilst making it easier for</p>	
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		<p>people to find key destinations, such as Dare Valley Country Park, which support an array of active pursuits.</p> <p>Early engagement findings have highlighted a couple of key routes which, particularly for the older generation, aren't currently easy to navigate. An example would be the route from the town centre to Cynon Valley Museum. The identified routes will therefore be the focus of improvements.</p> <p>Proposed improvements will also make it easier for people to choose more active modes of transport, thereby reducing the current reliance on cars within the town centre with positive associated impacts including improved pedestrian and cyclist safety for all age groups.</p> <p>Enhanced wayfinding signage will also enable those that do not use or are not proficient with digital technologies to find key facilities within the town, making the town's overall offer more accessible to a wider group of people.</p> <p>As part of the early engagement, the proposed investment themes, contained within the strategy, were discussed with representatives from 'Accessible Wales' who supported such improvements to signage due to the current signage being deemed poor, particularly for those with visual impairments.</p> <p>Theme 5: Enhancement of public open space, biodiversity and programme of events within the town centre.</p> <p>Initiatives delivered under this theme will seek to build on the considerable investment already delivered in and around the town centre to date to further enhance green spaces in and around the Town Centre. Aberdare has strong green</p>	
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		<p>credentials to build on and a range of existing community groups which are doing great work to generate local solutions to global problems. These include how we best protect our biodiversity, tackle climate change and work together to generate local level sustainable initiatives to support RCTCBC's target of becoming Net Zero by 2030. Projects will be designed to work with what is already being pursued, by groups within the town centre, to ensure that benefits are maximised for all.</p> <p>Aberdare Town Centre already hosts a strong programme of annual events, however, during early engagement with local residents it became clear that more could be done to promote and enhance the existing programme of events to cater for all age groups. Identification of initiatives to support this will be undertaken via a collaborative approach, working with local and wider community and business groups. Projects of this nature have the potential to provide several positive benefits to different age groups including:</p> <p>The younger generation, who are taught about climate change etc at school, will be encouraged to share their learnings with the older generation via practical, learning by doing activities. This may also work the other way, whereby the older generation can pass on skills (e.g.: food growing etc) to the younger generation.</p> <p>Enhanced green spaces will provide a high-quality public realm with street furniture providing people of all ages with an opportunity to sit and enjoy the town centre whilst finding out about local sustainable initiatives via new information boards.</p> <p>A wider range of events combined with better promotion and advertisement of such events will</p>	
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		<p>ensure that there are events suitable for all age groups.</p> <p>To achieve this, the use of digital information screens may be explored which will enable information to be updated more regularly and displayed in a way which is more accessible to different age groups.</p> <p>Theme 6: Support businesses to make the best of emerging opportunities via partnership working.</p> <p>Investment delivered, under theme 6, will support Partnerships between public, private, educational and community actors, building on the existing good work of the 'Our Aberdare' BID to support new initiatives such as those associated with social enterprise together with those aimed at supporting local businesses to make the best of emerging opportunities, such as tourism and the visitor economy.</p> <p>Opportunities to support businesses to adopt and integrate digital technologies into their business practices will be explored and corresponding initiatives will be developed. Such initiatives may include a mentoring programme where local businesses that have successfully utilised digital technology support other local businesses to learn how to do the same. This may have a positive impact for all age groups.</p>	
<p>Disability <i>(people with visible and non- visible disabilities or long-term health conditions)</i></p>	<p>Neutral (Not possible to say at this stage)</p>	<p>Questions related to disability were included within the online survey issued as part of a phase of early engagement. The findings showed that the majority of respondents did not identify as having a disability (80%). However, 15% of respondents identified as disabled in some way.</p> <p>Therefore, the engagement findings do provide a</p>	<p>Aberdare Town Centre Strategy</p> <p>Early Engagement Findings Report</p> <p>Formal Consultation Findings Report</p>

		<p>degree detail of issues, within the town centre, that concern people living with disabilities.</p> <p>Participants of the early engagement activities raised several issues that currently exist in Aberdare Town Centre that affect people with disabilities, these include:</p> <p>Accessibility for disabled people in the town centre could be improved, for example people who require wheelchair access.</p> <p>Lack of facilities for disabled people, for example public conveniences and changing facilities.</p> <p>Traffic flow could be improved, for example improved safety for deaf people.</p> <p>Public transport could be improved.</p> <p>Poor disabled parking provision.</p> <p>Issues related to obstacles on pavements, such as rubbish bins, making it difficult for disabled people to access the town centre at certain times.</p> <p>Additionally, the need for better advertisement of existing and future events was identified as part of both the early engagement and formal consultation. To achieve this, options may be explored into the utilisation of digital information screens within the town to share key information about such events.</p> <p>This will positively improve the accessibility of the information for all. The location and specific design of these screens will be informed by the needs of protected characteristic groups.</p> <p>As part of the early engagement, the Council met with representatives from Accessibility Wales who explained the need for more to be done, within the town centre, to raise awareness of how people can support residents with disabilities and how individual actions (such as leaving rubbish on the street) can have adverse effects for those living</p>	<p>Additionally, further evidence will be explored when specific projects and interventions, related to the proposed Investment Themes are taken through the development and consultation process.</p> <p>Disability Statistics/Data</p> <p>Attendance Allowance is payable to people over the age of 65 who are so severely disabled, physically or mentally, that they need a great deal of help with personal care or supervision.</p> <p>In RCT (Nov 22), 6,802 claimants of Attendance Allowance. That's 14.5% of people in RCT.</p> <p>Personal Independence Payments (PIP) was introduced after April 2013 and replaces disability Living Allowance for all new claimants. PIP helps with some of the extra costs caused by long-term disability, ill-health or terminal ill-health.</p> <p>22,068 individuals received Personal Independence Payment (PIP), as of April 2023, which is 14.7% of the population of RCT. Of the 22,068 individuals, 9,916 were men and 12,152 were female. Those receiving PIP with mental health</p>
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		<p>with disabilities.</p> <p>An idea, discussed during the meeting, was the inclusion of this on the 'Our Aberdare BID' board meeting to ensure that the issues facing this particular community are considered regularly within a formal setting. This will be explored via partnership approaches, along with other initiatives, during the development of individual projects delivered under the following themes.</p> <p>Theme 1: Redevelopment and re-use of existing underutilised, vacant or derelict buildings to accommodate a new, diverse offering.</p> <p>Accessibility considerations will be comprehensively evaluated during the development and delivery of key redevelopment projects with opportunities to enhanced disabled access to new buildings fully explored. More robust enforcement of conservation area rules will help to ensure that town centre properties are kept in good condition reducing the number of run-down facades that present opportunities for falling debris to block footpaths. Creation of a more diverse offering, within the Town Centre, will enhance the range and accessibility of facilities and amenities available, including healthcare.</p> <p>Theme 3: Enhancing the visitor experience and building on the existing and growing tourism offer.</p> <p>Proposed improvements at key gateways, to the town centre, will be developed with accessibility in mind and the needs of those living with different disabilities will be considered comprehensively.</p>	<p>conditions, as of Apr 2023 were 7,501.</p> <p>Households on Universal Credit – Limited capability for work entitlement, as of Feb 2023, stood at 5,590, 5.4 of all households in RCT.</p> <p>Those claiming Disability Living Allowance, as of Nov 22, was 7,653 individuals or 3.2% of the RCT population.</p> <p>At the 2021 census, 17,889 people in Cynon Valley were classed as disabled. The comparable Wales percentage was 22% and for England and Wales it was 18%.</p> <p>13,690 households in the Cynon Valley had at least one disabled person. This represents around 44% of all households. Households including one disabled person were most common.</p> <p>Interestingly, the percentage of people who were identified as being disabled and limited a lot in RCT decreased by 3.6 percentage points between the 2011 and 2021 census.</p> <p>As of the 2021 census, 12% of people identified as 'Disabled and Limited a lot', 11.8% Disabled and limited a little' and</p>
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		<p>Part of the improvements involve the addition of new information boards that will be designed to be read by all. This could, for example, necessitate some being placed at different heights along with the need to include brail/audio descriptions.</p> <p>Theme 4: Improvement/promotion of active travel and enhanced wayfinding signage. Improvements to key routes to and from the town centre will make it easier for people living with disabilities to visit different destinations e.g. Cynon Valley Museum, Aberdare Park etc Design of wayfinding signage will be informed by the needs of those with different disabilities and will improve the current signage, which has been said to be difficult to read. During the development of projects, delivered under this theme, any opportunities to enhance pedestrian and cyclist pathways will be explored to try and strengthen the town centre's connection with the outstanding natural landscape surrounding the town centre.</p> <p>Theme 5: Enhancement of public open space, biodiversity and programme of events within the town centre. Opportunities exist to increase the usability of open public spaces within the town centre will be explored via evaluation of the usability of current spaces with local residents living with disabilities. Exploration of local activities will be conducted to support the town centre's biodiversity and increase local response to global warming. Opportunities will be explored to work with local groups to ensure that proposed activities are accessible to all.</p> <p>Projects that seek to make more of recreational and leisure opportunities associated with the river and route up to Dare Valley Park will also be</p>	<p>76.2% identified as 'not disabled'.</p> <p>The percentage of people in good health in RCT increased by 21 percentage points at the last census.</p> <p>Aberdare Settlement disability Data: 935 individuals, within the Aberdare Settlement Area, claim Attendance Allowance. 3,150 people receive Personal Independence Payment. Of this figure, 1,111 individuals have mental health conditions. 850 households are on Universal Credit, with limited capability for work entitlement. 1,058 disability living allowance claimants.</p> <p>During the development of individual projects Regeneration officers will seek to collaborate with the appropriate internal and external stakeholders.</p>
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		<p>explored, under this investment theme.</p> <p>Theme 6: Support businesses to make the best of emerging opportunities via partnership working.</p> <p>As part of the development of individual projects/initiatives that seek to support local businesses, an understanding will be sought as to how accessible existing businesses currently are for the disabled community combined with any affordable measures to improve this.</p> <p>There may also be opportunities to work with any business owners that have disabilities themselves to provide enhanced support to enable them to fully optimise opportunities associated with emerging sectors, such as local tourism etc.</p> <p>Along with the early engagement the formal consultation of the strategy also concluded that 80% of respondents did not consider themselves to be disabled, 11.4% did and 8.6% preferred not to say. Additionally, views were sought from those with disabilities, of all types.</p>	
<p>Gender Reassignment <i>(anybody who's gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex they were assigned at birth including non-binary identities)</i></p>	<p>Neutral (Not possible to say at this stage)</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the overall impact as a result of delivery of the strategy will be positive for all groups with protected characteristics.</p> <p>The key objectives of the strategy aim to improve the town centre for all to make it a more desirable place to live, work and visit and this therefore includes those with protected characteristics.</p> <p>It is important to note that this impact is anticipated following the eventual outcome of the strategy.</p> <p>The need for better advertisement of existing and future events was identified as part of both the early engagement and formal consultation. To achieve this, options may be explored into the</p>	<p>From the engagement work undertaken to date, which has informed the development of the Aberdare Town Centre Strategy, there has been no evidence to suggest that there will be an impact on people that share this characteristic.</p> <p>However, evidence will be explored when specific projects and interventions delivered under the proposed investment themes within the Strategy are taken through the development and consultation process.</p>

		<p>utilisation of digital information screens within the town to share key information about such events.</p> <p>This will positively improve the accessibility of the information for all. The location and specific design of these screens will be informed by the needs of protected characteristic groups.</p>	<p>During the development of individual projects Regeneration officers will seek to collaborate with the appropriate internal and external stakeholders.</p>
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<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<p>Marriage or Civil Partnership <i>(people who are married or in a civil partnership)</i></p>	<p>Neutral (Not possible to say at this stage)</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the overall impact as a result of delivery of the strategy will be positive for all groups with protected characteristics.</p> <p>The key objectives of the strategy aim to improve the town centre for all to make it a more desirable place to live, work and visit and this therefore includes those with protected characteristics.</p> <p>It is important to note that this impact is anticipated following the eventual outcome of the strategy.</p> <p>The quality of life for everyone will be increased following the delivery of projects that aim to deliver the overarching objectives of the strategy.</p> <p>The need for better advertisement of existing and future events was identified as part of both the early engagement and formal consultation. To achieve this, options may be explored into the utilisation of digital information screens within the town to share key information about such events.</p> <p>This will positively improve the accessibility of the information for all. The location and specific design of these screens will be informed by the needs of protected characteristic groups.</p>	<p>From the engagement work undertaken to date, which has informed the development of the Aberdare Town Centre Strategy, there has been no evidence to suggest that there will be an impact on people that share this characteristic.</p> <p>However, evidence will be explored when specific projects and interventions delivered under the proposed investment themes within the Strategy are taken through the development and consultation process.</p> <p>During the development of individual projects Regeneration officers will seek to collaborate with the appropriate internal and external stakeholders.</p>

<p>Pregnancy and Maternity <i>(women who are pregnant/on maternity leave)</i></p>	<p>Neutral (Not possible to say at this stage)</p>	<p>Whilst 65% of respondents to the online survey, issued as part of early engagement activities, were female it is not possible to discern from the findings what the views/concerns are of women that are pregnant or on maternity leave.</p> <p>Data related to pregnancy and maternity was collected during the formal consultation. Of those that completed the online survey, 92.6% said they were not pregnant, 2.9% said that they are or had been in the last 12 months and 4.4% preferred not to say.</p> <p>During the formal consultation in-person events there was strong support for revisions to parking charges, prevention of illegal parking within the town centre and improvements to local transport infrastructure</p> <p>The quality of life for everyone will be increased following the delivery of projects that aim to deliver the overarching objectives of the strategy.</p> <p>The need for better advertisement of existing and future events was identified as part of both the early engagement and formal consultation. To achieve this, options may be explored into the utilisation of digital information screens within the town to share key information about such events.</p> <p>This will positively improve the accessibility of the information for all. The location and specific design of these screens will be informed by the needs of protected characteristic groups.</p>	<p>Aberdare Town Centre Strategy</p> <p>Early Engagement Findings Report</p> <p>Formal Consultation Findings Report</p> <p>Additionally, further evidence will be gathered when specific projects and interventions, related to the proposed Investment Themes are taken through the development and consultation process.</p> <p>During the development of individual projects Regeneration officers will seek to collaborate with the appropriate internal and external stakeholders.</p>
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<p>Race <i>(ethnic and racial groups i.e. minority ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers)</i></p>	<p>Neutral (Not possible to say at this stage)</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the overall impact as a result of delivery of the strategy will be positive for all groups with protected characteristics.</p> <p>The key objectives of the strategy aim to improve the town centre for all to make it a more desirable place to live, work and visit and this therefore includes those with protected characteristics.</p> <p>It is important to note that this impact is anticipated following the eventual outcome of the strategy.</p> <p>The quality of life for everyone will be increased following the delivery of projects that aim to deliver the overarching objectives of the strategy.</p> <p>The need for better advertisement of existing and future events was identified as part of both the early engagement and formal consultation. To achieve this, options may be explored into the utilisation of digital information screens within the town to share key information about such events.</p> <p>This will positively improve the accessibility of the information for all. The location and specific design of these screens will be informed by the needs of protected characteristic groups.</p>	<p>From the engagement work undertaken to date, which has informed the development of the Aberdare Town Centre Strategy, there has been no evidence to suggest that there will be an impact on people that share this characteristic.</p> <p>However, evidence will be explored when specific projects and interventions delivered under the proposed investment themes within the Strategy are taken through the development and consultation process.</p> <p>During the development of individual projects Regeneration officers will seek to collaborate with the appropriate internal and external stakeholders.</p>
<p>Religion or Belief <i>(people with different religions and philosophical beliefs including people with no beliefs)</i></p>	<p>Neutral (Not possible to say at this stage)</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the overall impact as a result of delivery of the strategy will be positive for all groups with protected characteristics.</p> <p>The key objectives of the strategy aim to improve the town centre for all to make it a more desirable place to live, work and visit and this therefore includes those with protected characteristics.</p>	<p>From the engagement work undertaken to date, which has informed the development of the Aberdare Town Centre Strategy, there has been no evidence to suggest that there will be an impact on people that share this characteristic.</p>

		<p>It is important to note that this impact is anticipated following the eventual outcome of the strategy.</p> <p>The quality of life for everyone will be increased following the delivery of projects that aim to deliver the overarching objectives of the strategy.</p> <p>The need for better advertisement of existing and future events was identified as part of both the early engagement and formal consultation. To achieve this, options may be explored into the utilisation of digital information screens within the town to share key information about such events.</p> <p>This will positively improve the accessibility of the information for all. The location and specific design of these screens will be informed by the needs of protected characteristic groups.</p>	<p>However, evidence will be explored when specific projects and interventions delivered under the proposed investment themes within the Strategy are taken through the development and consultation process.</p> <p>Statistics about Religion within the Aberdare Settlement Area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13,848 individuals identified as Christian • 79 as Buddhist • 53 Hindu • 0 as Jewish • 147 as Muslin • 10 as Sikh • 130 as 'other religion' • 15,691 as 'no religion'.
<p>Sex <i>(women and men, girls and boys)</i></p>	<p>Neutral (Not possible to say at this stage)</p>	<p>During the in-person workshops, delivered as part of early engagement, a feeling of reduced safety in particular areas of the town centre was raised several times. This was felt particularly strongly by young girls, who during younger generation workshops explained that there were certain routes to and from the Town Centre that they wouldn't use at certain times of the day. A lack of street lighting was identified together with increased numbers of young people loitering on playing fields due to the closure of youth clubs within the Town Centre.</p> <p>Importantly, during discussion with representatives from the younger generation they stressed the need for more opportunities</p>	<p>RCT Sex Specific Data:</p> <p>RCT has a population of 237,651, as of June 2023, of which 48.9% are male and 51.1% are female.</p> <p>There is a total population of 31,635 in the 'Aberdare Settlement Area' of which 48.8% are male and 51.2% are female.</p> <p>During the development of individual projects Regeneration officers will seek to collaborate with the appropriate internal and external stakeholders.</p>

		<p>for young people to gain practical work experience, which may unlock future paid employment opportunities within the town centre. This would serve to re-engage young people with town centre activities whilst reducing the number of young people loitering in and around the town centre. Opportunities to support such initiatives, particularly in relation to the growing local tourism industry, are to be explored under Investment Theme 3 and 6.</p> <p>Other initiatives proposed within the strategy which have the potential to address such concerns include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhanced street lighting on key routes to and from the town centre.• Evaluation of key movement junctions within the town centre (e.g.: the alleyways connecting commercial street and market street) to assess what could be done to reduce anti-social behaviour etc.• Improvements to key active travel routes may increase usage of certain routes, resulting in more visibility.• Creation of more opportunities for young people to engage in practical and productive activities that foster a sense of local ownership over the town centre and generate local solutions to global issues, such as climate change.• Exploration of enhanced ‘spaces for girls’ in local parks to ensure there are activities for young girls to get involved with. <p>Additionally, under Investment Theme 2: “Bringing the history and heritage of Aberdare to life” initiatives will be developed to bring groups of different age/ sex together to create innovative, creative and collaborate projects</p>	
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		<p>that tell past and future story of Aberdare Town Centre in a way that is relevant to all generations.</p> <p>During the formal consultation in-person events there was strong support for collaboration and partnership working, with a focus on the strong existing network of community groups already doing great work.</p> <p>The need for better advertisement of existing and future events was identified as part of both the early engagement and formal consultation. To achieve this, options may be explored into the utilisation of digital information screens within the town to share key information about such events.</p> <p>This will positively improve the accessibility of the information for all. The location and specific design of these screens will be informed by the needs of protected characteristic groups.</p>	
<p>Sexual Orientation <i>(bisexual, gay, lesbian, straight)</i></p>	<p>Neutral (Not possible to say at this stage)</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the overall impact as a result of delivery of the strategy will be positive for all groups with protected characteristics.</p> <p>The key objectives of the strategy aim to improve the town centre for all to make it a more desirable place to live, work and visit and this therefore includes those with protected characteristics.</p> <p>It is important to note that this impact is anticipated following the eventual outcome of the strategy.</p> <p>The quality of life for everyone will be increased following the delivery of projects that aim to</p>	<p>From the engagement work undertaken to date, which has informed the development of the Aberdare Town Centre Strategy, there has been no evidence to suggest that there will be an impact on people that share this characteristic.</p> <p>However, evidence will be explored when specific projects and interventions delivered under the proposed investment themes within the Strategy are taken through the development and consultation process.</p>

		<p>deliver the overarching objectives of the strategy.</p> <p>The need for better advertisement of existing and future events was identified as part of both the early engagement and formal consultation. To achieve this, options may be explored into the utilisation of digital information screens within the town to share key information about such events.</p> <p>This will positively improve the accessibility of the information for all. The location and specific design of these screens will be informed by the needs of protected characteristic groups.</p>	<p>During the development of individual projects Regeneration officers will seek to collaborate with the appropriate internal and external stakeholders.</p>
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In addition, due to Council commitments made to the following groups of people we would like you to consider impacts upon them:

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<p>Armed Forces Community <i>(anyone who is serving, has served, family members and the bereaved)</i></p>	<p>Neutral (Not possible to say at this stage)</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>From the engagement work undertaken to date, which has informed the development of the Aberdare Town Centre Strategy, there has been no evidence to suggest that there will be an impact on people that share this characteristic.</p> <p>However, evidence will be explored when specific projects and interventions delivered under the proposed investment themes within the Strategy are taken through the development and consultation process.</p>
<p>Carers <i>(anyone of any age who provides unpaid care)</i></p>	<p>Neutral (Not possible to say at this stage)</p>	<p>Questions related to caring were included within a survey published as part of early engagement. Findings showed that of the 614 respondents, the majority do not have any caring responsibilities. However, a number of respondents did care for someone, with most caring for between 10-19 hours per week.</p> <p>In this context, opportunities to support those that care for others, particularly young people, will be explored alongside evaluation of what</p>	<p>From the engagement work undertaken to date, which has informed the development of the Aberdare Town Centre Strategy, there has been no evidence to suggest that there will be an impact on people that share this characteristic.</p> <p>However, evidence will be explored when specific projects and interventions delivered under the proposed investment themes within the Strategy are taken through the</p>

		<p>is currently available within the town centre.</p> <p>As part of the formal consultation respondents were asked whether they had any Caring Responsibilities. <i>(Do you look after or support family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either: a long term physical or mental condition/disability or problems related to old age?)</i></p> <p>68.1% said 'no', 11.6% said that they were a carer 1-19 hours a week. 8% said they spent 20-49 hours a week, 8% preferred not to say and 4.3% said they spent 50 or more hours a week caring.</p> <p>These results are concurrent with those received during early engagement.</p>	<p>development and consultation process.</p> <p>Unpaid care in RCT: In 2021, 4.5% of RCT residents (aged five years and over) reported providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care each week. This figure decreased from 7.2% in 2011. The Welsh average fell from 7.4% to 4.7% in the same period.</p> <p>In 2021, around 1 in 40 people (2.5%) reported providing between 20 and 49 hours of unpaid care each week, compared with 2.1% in 2011. The proportion of RCT residents (aged five and over) that provided at least 50 hours of weekly unpaid care decreased from 4.5% to 4.2%.</p>
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If the initial screening test has identified negative impacts, then a full equality impact assessment (section 4) **must** be undertaken. However, if after undertaking the above screening test you determine a full equality impact assessment is not relevant please provide an adequate explanation below:

In the development and consultation process of the Aberdare Town Centre Strategy, there was no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a negative impact on a protected group. However, evidence will be explored when specific projects and interventions within the Town Centre Strategy are taken through the development and consultation process.

Are you happy you have sufficient evidence to justify your decision?

Yes No

Name: Emma Halford

Position: Regeneration Project Officer

Date: 28/11/2023

Please forward a copy of this completed screening form to the Diversity and Inclusion Team.

PLEASE NOTE – there is a separate impact assessment for Welsh Language. This must also be completed for proposals.

Section 3 Socio-economic Duty needs only to be completed if proposals are of a strategic nature or when reviewing previous strategic decisions. Definition of a 'strategic nature' is available on page 6 of the [Preparing for the Commencement of the Socio-economic Duty Welsh Government Guidance](#).

SECTION 3 – SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY (STRATEGIC DECISIONS ONLY)

The Socio-economic Duty gives us an opportunity to do things differently and put tackling inequality genuinely at the heart of key decision making. Socio-economic disadvantage means living on a low income compared to others in Wales, with little or no accumulated wealth, leading to greater material deprivation, restricting the ability to access basic goods and services.

Please consider these additional vulnerable groups and the impact your proposal may or may not have on them:

- Single parents and vulnerable families
- Pensioners
- Looked after children
- Homeless people
- Students
- Single adult households

- People living in the most deprived areas in Wales
- People with low literacy and numeracy
- People who have experienced the asylum system
- People misusing substances
- People of all ages leaving a care setting
- People involved in the criminal justice system

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<p>Low Income/<u>Income Poverty</u> <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i></p>	<p>Neutral</p> <p>It is anticipated that the Town Centre Strategy will create conditions that impact positively on this group. However, this will remain neutral until further evidence is available when specific projects and interventions are taken through the development and consultation process.</p>	<p>In Wales, ‘placemaking’ is critical in planning for development and places, with Planning Policy Wales identifying it as the process for creating sustainable places and maximising wellbeing. The policy describes “Placemaking” as a “holistic approach to the planning and design of development and spaces, focused on positive outcomes. It draws upon an area’s potential to create high quality development and public spaces that promote people’s prosperity, health, happiness, and well-being in the widest sense”.</p> <p>The Town Centre Strategy fully embraces the principles of placemaking as outlined in Planning Policy Wales and the Placemaking Charter and its six 6 principles which include people and community; location; movement; mix of uses; public realm; and identity.</p> <p>In addition to responding to national policy, the Town Centre Strategy also builds upon the local development and regeneration policy context as for example set out in the Council’s Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024. The Town Centre Strategy’s strategic objectives and investment themes align with the key priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and will seek to deliver interventions and projects that will support People (are independent, healthy and successful), Places (where people are proud to live work and play) and</p>	<p>Aberdare Town Centre Strategy</p> <p>Planning Policy Wales, Edition 11</p> <p>Making a Difference. The Councils Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024</p> <p>Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015</p> <p>RCTCBC Think Climate Strategy</p> <p>A Community Insight profile for the Aberdare Settlement Area has identified the following statistics -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,453 of people are working age workless benefit claimants (Source: Department for Work and Pensions May 21) • 1,464 of people are Universal Credit claimants (Source: Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Dec 21) • 4,686 of households are deprived in at least 1 dimension (Source: Census 2011) • 2,105 of Households living in ‘Fuel Poverty’ (Source: Office for National Statistics (2017/2018))

		<p>Prosperity (creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, be entrepreneurial, and fulfil their potential and prosper).</p> <p>The Strategy also strongly supports the realisation of the Council's key objective of 'Making Rhondda Cynon Taf Carbon Neutral by 2030', as outlined within the RCTCBC Think Climate Strategy (2022-2025) through:</p> <p>Supporting the diversification and expansion of the range of facilities and amenities available within the town centre to increase the town's self-sufficiency and to reduce the need for people to travel elsewhere.</p> <p>Enhancement of active travel connectivity to and from the town centre to make it easier for people to choose sustainable modes of transport.</p> <p>Working with local and wider community groups to develop local sustainable solutions to global problems, such as climate change.</p> <p>Raising awareness of the Council's Net Zero ambition via local-level action planning with a focus on the role that the younger generation may play in championing sustainable initiatives.</p> <p>Ensuring that all new physical developments utilise energy-efficient technologies whilst working with existing local business and property owners to retrofit energy-efficient technologies to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14,247 of people are economically inactive (Source: Census 2011)
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		<p>reduce the town centre's reliance on non-renewable energy sources.</p> <p>Such a focus on town centres is also strongly supported by the Welsh Government's 'Town Centre First' policy within its Future Wales National Plan 2040. The policy advocates for a town centre first approach via which the health and vibrancy of town centres is the starting point of locational decision-making. The policy also highlights the important multi-functional role that town centres are increasingly playing within communities, providing a diverse range of facilities and amenities, and therefore the growth and regeneration of such centres is a key national priority.</p> <p>Additionally, the Strategy is synonymous with the principles of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015) as evidenced by a thorough evaluation of the proposed investment themes against the Act's 'Severn Social Wellbeing Goals' (see page 36 and 37 of the Strategy). Importantly, the younger generation have been involved in the development of the Strategy, via early engagement, and therefore the focus of the strategy reflects the views and ideas of future generations. Importantly, the design and development of local level projects will be subject to further comprehensive evaluation to ensure that the potential contribution of all future investment, within the town centre, to realisation of the Act's Seven Social Wellbeing Goals is maximised.</p> <p>Importantly, key opportunities are outlined within the Strategy which if effectively</p>	
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		<p>optimised offer the potential for positive benefits for those with low incomes these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved pedestrian and cycle routes in and around the town centre, will make it easier and more affordable for people to visit nearby destinations which may open up new local employment opportunities to those that were previously unable to get to such destinations.• Redevelopment and re-use of vacant or run-down properties within the town centre will serve to diversify the town's offering and create new local employment opportunities.• Local people may be able to learn new skills and knowledge via the projects aimed at bringing Aberdare's story to life including curation, digital literacy etc.• Projects that aim to generate local solutions to global challenges, such as climate change, have the potential to create new opportunities for people on low incomes to access affordable food sources via community growing initiatives (for example). Other examples may include re-use hubs where people can access an array of items for free.	
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<p>Low and / or No Wealth <i>(enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provisions for the future)</i></p>	<p>Neutral</p> <p>It is anticipated that Town Centre Strategy will create conditions that will impact positively on this group. However, this will remain neutral until further evidence is available when specific projects and interventions are taken through the development and consultation process.</p>	<p>The series of proposed 'Investment Themes' contained within the Town Centre Strategy have been developed to respond to the current opportunities and challenges, identified via baseline analysis and early engagement, as well as national and corporate priority objectives.</p> <p>Whilst it is not possible to evaluate the impact of the strategy on those with 'low and/or no wealth', due to this only being possible during the development and delivery of individual projects, the proposed Investment Themes contained within the Strategy do provide key opportunities for projects which support those with low and/or no wealth via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased investment within the town centre will support new, local job creation opportunities. • All opportunities to make the most of key new transportation schemes, such as the South Wales Metro, will be fully explored to optimise the potential benefits that this may provide for low/no wealth groups. • By providing enhanced to support to local businesses, new opportunities may emerge to help people into work and better paid jobs. • Community driven, local level initiatives have the potential to create new facilities and/or programmes that support those with low and/or no wealth with day-to-day needs (e.g.: via re-use hubs 	<p>Aberdare Town Centre Strategy</p> <p>Planning Policy Wales, Edition 11</p> <p>Making a Difference. The Councils Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024</p> <p>Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015</p> <p>RCTCBC Think Climate Strategy</p> <p>Welsh Government Town Centre First Principle</p> <p>A Community Insight profile for the Aberdare Settlement Area has identified the following statistics -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,453 of people are working age workless benefit claimants (Source: Department for Work and Pensions May 21) • 1,464 of people are Universal Credit claimants (Source: Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Dec 21) • 4,686 of households are deprived in at least 1 dimension (Source: Census 2011) • 2,105 of Households living in 'Fuel Poverty' (Source: Office for National Statistics (2017/2018) • 14,247 of people are economically inactive (Source: Census 2011)
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		<p>etc).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilisation of vacant and/or derelict properties, within the town centre, may generate new opportunities for local people to test business ideas resulting in wealth generation. • Integration and engagement with young people, during the development and delivery of individual projects, will support the identification of opportunities to support young people into the workplace. 	
<p><u>Material Deprivation</u> <i>(unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.)</i></p>	<p>Neutral</p> <p>It is anticipated that Town Centre Strategy will create conditions that will impact positively on this group. However, this will remain neutral until further evidence is available when specific projects and interventions are taken through the development and consultation process.</p>	<p>The Town Centre Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the national Town Centres First principle: “Ensuring a thriving future for our town/city centre[s] must be a key driver. We can increase footfall and accessibility and make a vital contribution to the vibrancy and sustainability of our town centres by locating public bodies, partner organisations and associated services/facilities in them. This should be the default option for any new investment and decisions to locate elsewhere should only be made where there is compelling evidence that this is necessary/justified. Proportionate and best value decision making regarding location should include consideration of the impact on town centres, social cohesion, accessibility by public transport, the environment and climate change”.</p> <p>The Town Centre Strategy seeks to optimise potential benefits, for all, from any future investment within the town centre by providing a framework through</p>	<p>Aberdare Town Centre Strategy</p> <p>Planning Policy Wales, Edition 11</p> <p>Making a Difference. The Councils Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024</p> <p>Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015</p> <p>RCTCBC Think Climate Strategy</p> <p>Welsh Government Town Centre First Principle</p> <p>Community Insight profile has identified the following statistics for people who live in the Aberdare Settlement Area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,453 of people are working age workless benefit claimants (Source: Department for Work and Pensions May 21) • 1,464 of people are

		<p>which investment can be coordinated. The framework takes the form of a series of proposed investment themes, which are inter-related, under which individual projects will be developed and delivered. Individual projects will seek to contribute to the achievement of national level, corporate level and local level objectives.</p> <p>The following investment themes are proposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1: Redevelopment and re-use of existing underutilised, vacant or derelict buildings to accommodate a new, diverse offering. • Theme 2: Bringing the history and heritage of Aberdare to life. • Theme 3: Enhancing the visitor experience and building on the existing and growing tourism offer. • Theme 4: Improvement / promotion of active travel and enhanced wayfinding signage. • Theme 5: Enhancement of public open space, biodiversity and programme of events within the town centre. • Theme 6: Support businesses to make the best of emerging opportunities via partnership working. <p>Importantly, the development of the investment themes has been informed by a phase of comprehensive early engagement with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders. This early engagement has helped to shape the focus and scope of the Strategy to ensure that the proposed themes are relevant to</p>	<p>Universal Credit claimants (Source: Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Dec 21)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,686 of households are deprived in at least 1 dimension (Source: Census 2011) • 2,105 of Households living in 'Fuel Poverty' (Source: Office for National Statistics (2017/2018)) • 14,247 of people are economically inactive (Source: Census 2011)
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		<p>the current challenges and opportunities, evident within the town centre.</p> <p>The Strategy has been subject to a further phase of formal consultation, during which the relevancy of the vision, objectives and themes contained within the strategy has been discussed with a wide range of stakeholders.</p> <p>During the formal consultation there was opportunities for residents and visitors to identify key areas, within the town centre, that require additional investment and share their views/opinions on which ideas/initiatives should be pursued first etc. This reflects the collaborative nature via which the Strategy has been developed and it is hoped that by adopting such an approach the resultant interventions/initiatives will produce wide-reaching benefits for all.</p>	
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<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<p><u>Area Deprivation</u> <i>(where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport))</i></p>	<p>Neutral</p> <p>It is anticipated that Town Centre Strategy will create conditions that will impact positively on this group. However, this will remain neutral until further evidence is available when specific projects and interventions are taken through the development and consultation process.</p>	<p>The Town Centre Strategy has been prepared in accord with the national Town Centres First principle: “Ensuring a thriving future for our town/city centre[s] must be a key driver. We can increase footfall and accessibility and make a vital contribution to the vibrancy and sustainability of our town centres by locating public bodies, partner organisations and associated services/facilities in them. This should be the default option for any new investment and decisions to locate elsewhere should only be made where there is compelling evidence that this is necessary/justified. Proportionate and best value decision making regarding location should include consideration of the impact on town centres, social cohesion, accessibility by public transport, the environment and climate change”.</p> <p>The Town Centre Strategy seeks to optimise potential benefits, for all, from any future investment within the town centre by providing a framework through which investment can be coordinated. The framework takes the form of a series of proposed investment themes, which are inter-related, under which individual projects will be developed and delivered. Individual projects will seek to contribute to the achievement of national level, corporate level and local level objectives.</p> <p>The following investment themes are</p>	<p>Aberdare Town Centre Strategy</p> <p>Planning Policy Wales, Edition 11</p> <p>Making a Difference. The Councils Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024</p> <p>Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015</p> <p>RCTCBC Think Climate Strategy</p> <p>Welsh Government Town Centre First Principle</p> <p>Community Insight profile has identified the following statistics for people who live in the Aberdare Settlement Area –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9,068 of people are living in the most deprived 20% of areas in Wales (Source: Welsh Government (Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019)) • 17,189 of people living in hard pressed neighbourhoods (Source: Output Area Classification (2011)) • 1,055 of people living in rural residents (Source: Output Area Classification (2011)) • 3,309 of households have

		<p>proposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1: Redevelopment and re-use of existing underutilised, vacant or derelict buildings to accommodate a new, diverse offering. • Theme 2: Bringing the history and heritage of Aberdare to life. • Theme 3: Enhancing the visitor experience and building on the existing and growing tourism offer. • Theme 4: Improvement / promotion of active travel and enhanced wayfinding signage. • Theme 5: Enhancement of public open space, biodiversity and programme of events within the town centre. • Theme 6: Support businesses to make the best of emerging opportunities via partnership working. <p>Importantly, the development of the investment themes has been informed by a phase of comprehensive early engagement with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders. This early engagement has helped to shape the focus and scope of the Strategy to ensure that the proposed themes are relevant to the current challenges and opportunities, evident within the town centre.</p> <p>The Strategy has been the subject of a further phase of formal consultation, during which the relevancy of strategies vision, objectives and themes were considered. Findings from this formal consultation can be found in the findings</p>	<p>no car. (Source: Census 2011)</p>
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		<p>report embedded at the start of this document.</p> <p>Key findings from this formal consultation include:</p> <p>63.8% said that the strategy accurately describes the town's strengths.</p> <p>80.4% said that the strategy accurately describes the town's key threats and challenges.</p> <p>69.3% agreed with the different opportunities that could be explored in and around the Town Centre.</p> <p>86.4% of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the strategy's overall vision for Aberdare town centre.</p> <p>A high majority of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the strategy's five main strategic objectives.</p> <p>More than 77.5% of respondents supported each of the strategy's investment themes.</p>	
<p>Socio-economic background <i>(social class i.e. parents education, employment and income)</i></p>	<p>Neutral</p> <p>It is anticipated that Town Centre Strategy will create the conditions that will result in a positive impact on this group. However, this will remain neutral until further evidence is available when</p>	<p>In Wales placemaking is critical in planning for development and places, with Planning Policy Wales identifying it as the process for creating sustainable places and maximising wellbeing. The policy describes "Placemaking" as a "holistic approach to the planning and design of development and spaces, focused on positive outcomes. It draws upon an</p>	<p>Aberdare Town Centre Strategy</p> <p>Planning Policy Wales, Edition 11</p> <p>Making a Difference. The Councils Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024</p> <p>Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015</p>

	<p>specific projects and interventions are taken through the development and consultation process. However, this impact assessment will seek to evidence how the Town Centre Strategy aims to create the conditions that will have a positive impact on this group.</p>	<p>area's potential to create high quality development and public spaces that promote people's prosperity, health, happiness, and well-being in the widest sense".</p> <p>The Town Centre Strategy fully embraces the policy approach of Planning Policy Wales and the Placemaking Charter and its six 6 principles which include people and community; location; movement; mix of uses; public realm; and identity.</p> <p>In addition to responding to national policy, the Strategy builds upon the local development and regeneration policy context such as the Council's Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024. The Strategy's core ambitions align with the key priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and will seek to deliver interventions and projects that will support People (are independent, healthy and successful), Places (where people are proud to live work and play) and Prosperity (creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, be entrepreneurial, and fulfil their potential and prosper).</p> <p>Additionally, the Strategy is synonymous with the principles of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015) as evidenced by a thorough evaluation of the proposed investment themes against the Act's 'Severn Social Wellbeing Goals' (see page 36 and 37 of the Strategy). Importantly, the younger generation have been involved in the development of the Strategy, via early engagement, and therefore the focus of the strategy reflects the views and ideas of future generations.</p>	<p>RCTCBC Think Climate Strategy</p> <p>Welsh Government Town Centre First Principle</p> <p>Community Insight profile has identified the following statistics for people who live in the Aberdare Settlement Area –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5,985 of people have no qualifications (Source: Census 2011) • 1,050 of children are in absolute relative low-income families (Source: Children in low-income families, Department for Work and Pensions (2019)) • 1,709 of children are in relative low-income families (Source: Children in low-income families, Department for Work and Pensions (2019))
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		<p>Importantly, the design and development of local level projects will be subject to further comprehensive evaluation to ensure that the potential contribution of all future investment, within the town centre, to realisation of the Act's Seven Social Wellbeing Goals is maximised.</p> <p>The Town Centre Strategy seeks to optimise potential benefits, for all, from any future investment within the town centre by providing a framework through which investment can be coordinated. The framework takes the form of a series of proposed investment themes, which are inter-related, under which individual projects will be developed and delivered. Individual projects will seek to contribute to the achievement of national level, corporate level and local level objectives.</p> <p>The following investment themes are proposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Theme 1: Redevelopment and re-use of existing underutilised, vacant or derelict buildings to accommodate a new, diverse offering.• Theme 2: Bringing the history and heritage of Aberdare to life.• Theme 3: Enhancing the visitor experience and building on the existing and growing tourism offer.• Theme 4: Improvement / promotion of active travel and enhanced wayfinding signage.• Theme 5: Enhancement of public open space, biodiversity and programme of events within the town centre.• Theme 6: Support businesses to	
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		<p>make the best of emerging opportunities via partnership working.</p> <p>Importantly, the development of the investment themes has been informed by a phase of comprehensive early engagement with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders. This early engagement has helped to shape the focus and scope of the Strategy to ensure that the proposed themes are relevant to the current challenges and opportunities, evident within the town centre.</p> <p>Key findings from the formal consultation include:</p> <p>63.8% said that the strategy accurately describes the town's strengths.</p> <p>80.4% said that the strategy accurately describes the town's key threats and challenges.</p> <p>69.3% agreed with the different opportunities that could be explored in and around the Town Centre.</p> <p>86.4% of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the strategy's overall vision for Aberdare town centre.</p> <p>A high majority of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the strategy's five main strategic objectives.</p> <p>More than 77.5% of respondents supported each of the strategy's investment themes.</p>	
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<p>Socio-economic disadvantage <i>(What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)</i></p>	<p>Neutral</p> <p>It is anticipated that the Town Centre Strategy will create the conditions that will result in a cumulative positive impact in relation to socio economic disadvantage. However, this will remain neutral until further evidence is available when specific projects and interventions are taken through the development and consultation process. However, this impact assessment will seek to evidence how the Strategy aims to create the conditions that will have a positive cumulative impact in relation to socio-economic disadvantage.</p>	<p>The Strategy provides an ambitious yet achievable vision for the town centre, and identifies interventions that can be developed and delivered, in collaboration with the local and wider community, to further unlock the town's potential, building on the range of investment already delivered to date.</p> <p>Deployment of the strategy will strongly contribute to strengthening the town's identity as a key economic, social and cultural centre, within the Cardiff Capital Region, and therefore the strategy has the potential to provide a positive cumulative impact in relation to socio-economic disadvantage.</p> <p>The Strategy provides an overarching framework through which future investment, within the town centre, can be coordinated effectively to tackle socio economic disadvantage. Potential positive impacts, via the delivery of the strategy, may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more diverse range of facilities and amenities within the town centre, generated via redevelopment of vacant and/or underutilised properties. • Increased employment opportunities due to wider range of businesses located within the town centre. • Enhanced accessibility in and around the town centre, with a focus on active travel, to make it easier and more affordable for people to access key destinations. <p>Key findings from this formal consultation</p>	<p>Aberdare Town Centre Strategy</p> <p>Planning Policy Wales, Edition 11</p> <p>Making a Difference. The Councils Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024</p> <p>Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015</p> <p>RCTCBC Think Climate Strategy</p> <p>Welsh Government Town Centre First Principle</p>
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		<p>include:</p> <p>63.8% said that the strategy accurately describes the town's strengths.</p> <p>80.4% said that the strategy accurately describes the town's key threats and challenges.</p> <p>69.3% agreed with the different opportunities that could be explored in and around the Town Centre.</p> <p>86.4% of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the strategy's overall vision for Aberdare town centre.</p> <p>A high majority of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the strategy's five main strategic objectives.</p> <p>More than 77.5% of respondents supported each of the strategy's investment themes.</p>	
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SECTION 4 – FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

You should use the information gathered at the screening stage to assist you in identifying possible negative/adverse impacts and clearly identify which groups are affected.

- 4.a) In terms of disproportionate/negative/adverse impacts that the proposal may have on a protected group, outline the steps that will be taken to reduce or mitigate the impact for each group identified. **Attach a separate action plan where impacts are substantial.**

In the development and consultation process of the Aberdare Town Centre Strategy, there was no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a negative impact on a protected group.

- 4.b) If ways of reducing the impact have been identified but are not possible, please explain why they are not possible.

In the development and consultation process of the Aberdare Town Centre Strategy, there was no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a negative impact on a protected group.

- 4.c) Give sufficient detail of data or research that has led to your reasoning, in particular, the sources used for establishing the demographics of service users/staff.

In the development and consultation process of the Aberdare Town Centre Strategy, there was no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a negative impact on a protected group.

- 4.d) Give details of how you engaged with service users/staff on the proposals and the steps taken to avoid any disproportionate impact on a protected group. Explain how you have used feedback to influence your decision.

In the development and consultation process of the Aberdare Town Centre Strategy, there was no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a negative impact on a protected group.

- 4.e) Are you satisfied that the engagement process complies with the requirements of the Statutory Equality and Socio-economic Duties?

Yes

No

SECTION 5 – MONITORING AND REVIEW

5a) Please outline below how the implementation of the proposal will be monitored:

The Aberdare Town Centre Strategy is to be submitted to Cabinet on the 6th December 2023, following the revision of the strategy following the formal consultation process. Detail of the findings from the formal consultation together with the range of revisions made to the strategy as a result will be submitted to the Cabinet. Approval will be sought to adopt the strategy.

On receipt of approval from Cabinet to adopt the Aberdare Town Centre Strategy, governance arrangements will be established to take responsibility for the strategic direction and management of the Strategy and to represent the interests of the Council, stakeholders and the wider community, ensuring an appropriate reporting structure and lines of accountability.

5b) When is the evaluation of the proposal due to be reviewed?

The Aberdare Town Centre Strategy will be actively used and implemented over the short, medium and long term. Phasing in this way will ensure that the plan delivers immediate positive change but also delivers growth and investment consistently over a realistic delivery period.

5c) Who is responsible for the monitoring and review of the proposal?

RCT Regeneration Team will be responsible developing a monitoring, evaluation and review framework as part of the agreed governance arrangements.

5d) How will the results of the monitoring be used to develop future proposals?

The ongoing monitoring and implementation of the overall Strategy will require a number of component interventions and projects to deliver its objectives. Each intervention and project will be subject to their own development and consultation process and will develop their own individual action plan and establish their own Project Board.

SECTION 6 – REVIEW

As part of the Impact Assessment process all proposals that fall within the definition of ‘Key Decisions’ must be submitted to the Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your proposal is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.

If this proposal is a Key Decision please forward your impact assessment to Councilbusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk for a Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. The EqIA guidance document provides more information on what a Key Decision is.

It is important to keep a record of this process so that you can demonstrate how you have considered equality and socio-economic outcomes. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below

Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
<p>It was acknowledged that a lot of effort and engagement had gone into the process and that the Impact Assessment was robust with relevant evidence and up to date census data;</p> <p>The proposal was positive but also aspirational.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age section – it was noted that there were issues with the definition of ‘accessibility’ and that although it was noted from the consultation that transport was a problem, the section contradicts and describes the town as easily accessible. This contradiction is one to be aware of through the documents. • Disability section – how will individual projects be monitored to ensure they meet the accessibility needs? • Gender Reassignment and Pregnancy sections – Where there is no evidence to suggest that there is a positive impact, it should be noted as neutral impact. There will be opportunity in the future to update the impacts when the individual projects begin; • Race & Religion sections could be strengthened to include information on hate crime, particularly in relation to the night-time economy and race; and 	<p>28/11/2023</p>	<p>As individual projects are developed further consideration will be given to ensuring future Impact Assessments associated with those projects take account of the comments made by the Officer Review Panel. Specifically regarding accessibility, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and race and religion.</p> <p>Areas identified by the Officer Review Panel where there is no clear evidence to suggest there is a positive impact have been amended to show “neutral”.</p> <p>Within the Strategy document itself the term “accessibility” has been rephrased for clarity and understanding, in the context of the Strategy.</p> <p>Socio-economic duty – the Strategy document has been strengthened to ensure wider partnership working across Council departments and external organisations will seek to ensure socio-economic disadvantage is reduced through the provision of work placement and training opportunities.</p>

<p>engagement with the mosque located in Aberdare. It was noted that there will be further opportunity to engage once the individual projects begin, to ensure any minority perspectives are included.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-economic Duty – This is a good example of a Strategy, where the spirit of the duty could be used to really strengthen the proposal. For example, what opportunities can the proposal bring to reduce socio-economic disadvantages, such as additional training, work experience and/or volunteering. There is an opportunity to further expand on how partnership working with other areas across Council can develop these prospects; and • The Impact Assessment refers to ‘hard pressed areas’ and it was questioned whether the residents from those areas engaged with the consultation and if there is anything further to be done to reduce the negative impact. 		
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation
<p>In preparing the Strategy, a phase of ‘Early Engagement’ was undertaken, by Regeneration officers, between November 2022 and February 2023. The aim was to ensure that the Strategy under consideration is suitably focused and appropriate in its content.</p> <p>Evidence confirms that early engagement and involvement of stakeholders in identifying and defining a town’s strengths, weaknesses and opportunities considerably strengthens the production of town centre strategies. In addition to drawing upon local knowledge, such engagement ensures that local people have an opportunity to shape and focus interventions aimed at addressing issues affecting them most. Early involvement also helps to foster a sense of local ownership and commitment to the successful implementation of the strategy. A variety of engagement tools and techniques were used including:</p>	28/11/2023	As individual projects are developed further consideration will be given to ensuring future Impact Assessments associated with those projects take account of the comments made by the Officer Review Panel. Specifically, how we can ensure we engage more widely with people from all socio-economic backgrounds.

An online survey titled, “Aberdare Town Centre: What do you think” was publicly accessible on the Council’s Let’s Talk online platform, between the 16th November 2022 and 9th January 2023. The survey focused on key themes such as:

Identification and prioritisation of the Town’s key strengths and challenges (including accessibility etc).

Creation of key investment themes to help focus and coordinate future investment in the town.

The town’s current hospitality offering.

Promotion and integration of the Welsh Language.

In-person ‘workshops’ at Sobell Leisure Centre were delivered, with internal and external stakeholders, at which stakeholders were asked to work collaboratively to undertake a SWOT analysis of the town centre and prioritise a series of ‘Investment Themes’. Questions about the promotion of the Welsh Language and Accessibility were also discussed.

Focused in-person meetings with key stakeholders to discuss specific themes, such as funding and business community / wider community concerns.

614 survey responses were received and a further 45 stakeholders engaged in in-person workshops and meetings.

Of those respondents that input their postcode, over 453 were from the Aberdare area, 32 from Mountain Ash, 4 from Treherbert, 7 from Ferndale and 2 from Pontypridd (as shown on the map below).

Demographic information collated from the online survey shows that less people aged between 16-24 years old and 75 years + responded to the survey. The engagement from under-represented groups was monitored closely and in response to these findings, RCTCBC have organised

additional in-person workshops with these age groups, to be delivered in February 2023.

The engagement exercise has assisted with identifying and prioritising the Town's key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. A summary of these findings is provided below for both the online survey and in-person workshops/meetings.

Online survey respondents strongly agreed that Aberdare Town Centre has the following key strengths:

- Proximity to nearby tourism destinations (e.g. DVCP/Zip world)
- Readily available parking
- Accessible active leisure facilities
- Good public transport links
- Strong community spirit within the town

Online survey respondents strongly agreed that Aberdare Town Centre has the following key challenges:

- Decline of the high street (e.g. vacant shops)
- Impact of Internet Shopping
- Cost of Living Crisis
- Economic Downturn
- Competition from other towns

Based upon the outcomes of the SWOT analysis undertaken, the following investment themes were identified and agreed as priorities by participants in the engagement exercise:

Top 10 priority investment themes (Online Survey):

- Bringing empty buildings back into use
- Attracting new businesses/facilities into the town
- Investing in the Town's appearance
- Creating vibrant streets with lots of activity
- Diversifying and developing the 'offer' within the town

- Providing support to local businesses
- Making it easier to travel to and within the town
- Making the most of Aberdare's important historic buildings
- Improving physical connections between the town centre and attractions
- Improving provision for sustainable modes of transport

Top 10 priority investment themes (In-Person Workshops):

- Enhancement and diversification of the town's offer
- Redevelopment and re-use of vacant/derelict buildings
- Strengthen overall town's appearance/brand - live, work & visit
- Physical connections between key sites, via active travel
- Tourism and visitor offer
- Partnerships and local level innovation
- Sustainability and biodiversity
- Aberdare's history and heritage
- Hospitality and evening offer
- Further enhancement of public realm

It became clear, from the discussions during the workshops and responses to the online survey, that the theme of 'Sustainability' should not be differentiated as a standalone 'investment theme'. Instead, it was felt that it was more appropriate to incorporate it as a key consideration within all investment themes due to its importance and strategic influence.

Please see '**Early Engagement Findings Report**' for a comprehensive overview of the findings from early engagement work.

Formal consultation in respect of The Aberdare Town Centre Strategy, took place between August and November 2023.

A range of methods were used to consult with the local and wider community including:

- An online survey with interactive quick polls, made available on the RCT Let's Talk website. Digital copies of the Strategy and supporting documents were also made available online in both Welsh and English.
- A series of in-person events at various locations in and around the town centre where paper copies of the survey, Strategy and supporting documents were available to take away.
- Leaflets and posters were delivered to businesses and organisations within the town centre to promote the consultation.
- A physical exhibition, held at Aberdare Library, with detailed information about the development of the Strategy and previous early engagement. Paper copies of the Strategy, online survey and supporting documents were available for collection.
- Social media posts and emails were also published throughout the consultation to promote all methods of consultation.

A total of 142 completed surveys were received, with a further 17 responses to the "Quick Poll" function on the website. This includes the results from a number of paper copies which were available in Aberdare Library for people to pick up, fill in and then post into a secure box. Freepost envelopes were also provided at the library.

Key findings include:

- 63.8% said that the strategy accurately describes the town's strengths.
- 80.4% said that the strategy accurately describes the town's key threats and challenges.
- 69.3% agreed with the different opportunities that could be explored in and around the Town Centre.
- 86.4% of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the strategy's overall vision for Aberdare town centre.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A high majority of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the strategy's five main strategic objectives.• More than 77.5% of respondents supported each of the strategy's investment themes.• 17 respondents took part in Poll 1 on the Let's Talk website. 64.7% agreed that the strategy accurately captures the range of key opportunities and challenges facing Aberdare town centre.• 30 young people from 4 schools took part overall.• 65.5% of young people surveyed, agreed that the Strategy accurately described the town's strengths.• The majority of young people strongly agreed or agreed with the strategic objectives.• The majority of young people surveyed, supported the investment themes.		
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SECTION 6 – SUMMARY OF IMPACTS FOR THE PROPOSAL

Provide below a summary of the impact assessment. This summary should be included in the equality and socio-economic impact section of the Cabinet report template. The impact assessment should be published alongside the report.

The impact and potential benefits that the strategy may have on a diverse variety of different socio-economic groups has been a key consideration during the preparation of the strategy. Key questions about how the town centre currently works for such groups were included in early engagement to enable generation of a baseline review of what currently works well and what could be improved. The findings from these early questions greatly informed the content of the Strategy to ensure that the proposed ‘investment themes’ acknowledge the most pressing issues identified.

Preparation of the Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment has been an iterative, transparent process through which feedback and input has been sought from various key stakeholders. Importantly, a ‘working draft’ of the assessment was shared online via the Council’s ‘Let’s Talk’ page as part of the formal consultation, to provide a key opportunity for scrutiny and review. Positively, no comments were received in relation to the ‘working draft’ but key points were discussed during in-person formal consultation events.

Following completion of the formal consultation, the ‘working draft’ impact assessment has been subject to detailed review and revision to incorporate the findings from the formal consultation and feedback from internal departments.

Overall, the Equality and Socio-Economic Impact of the strategy is anticipated to be positive given that the quality of life for everyone will be improved if realisation of the Strategy’s vision and strategic objectives is achieved.

SECTION 7 – AUTHORISATIONS

Lead Officer: Emma Halford

Position: Regeneration Project Officer

Date: 28.11.2023

I recommend that the proposal:

- Is implemented with no amendments
- Is implemented taking into account the mitigating actions outlined
- Is rejected due to disproportionate negative impacts on protected groups or socio-economic disadvantage

Head of Service/Director Approval:

Name: Derek James

Position: Service Director, Prosperity & Development

Date: 11/12/2023

Please submit this impact assessment with any SLT/Cabinet Reports.