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MAE HWN YN GYFARFOD Y MAE GAN Y CYHOEDD HAWL EI FYNYCHU

Dydd Iau, 30 Ionawr 2020

Annwyl Syr/Madam

CYFARFOD CYFFREDINOL Y CYNGOR

Cynhelir cyfarfod o'r Cyfarfod Cyffredinol y Cyngor yn Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale on Dydd Iau, 6ed Chwefror, 2020 am 10.00 am.

Yn gywir

Michelle Morris
Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr

AGENDA

1. CYFIEITHU AR Y PRYD

Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, mae angen o leiaf 3 diwrnod gwaith o hysbysiad ymlaen llaw os dymunwch wneud hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais.

2. YMDDIHEURIADAU

Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

3. DATGANIADAU BUDDIANT A GODDEFEBAU

We welcome correspondence in the medium of Welsh or English. / Croesawn ohebiaith trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg.

Ystyried unrhyw ddatganiadau buddiant a goddefebau a dderbyniwyd.

4. CYHOEDDIADAU'R CADEIRYDD

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TRWDDEDU CYFFREDINOL)

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11. **CYFARFOD ARBENNIG O'R PWYLLGOR
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At: Cynghorwyr M. Moore (Cadeirydd)
J. Holt (Deputy Chair)
P. Baldwin
D. Bevan
G. Collier
J. Collins
M. Cook
M. Cross
N. Daniels
D. Davies
G. A. Davies
G. L. Davies
M. Day
P. Edwards
L. Elias
D. Hancock
K. Hayden
S. Healy
J. Hill
W. Hodgins
M. Holland
J. Mason
H. McCarthy
C. Meredith
J. Millard
J. C. Morgan
J. P. Morgan
L. Parsons
G. Paulsen
K. Pritchard
K. Rowson
T. Sharrem
T. Smith
B. Summers
B. Thomas
G. Thomas
S. Thomas
H. Trollope
J. Wilkins
D. Wilkshire
B. Willis
L. Winnett

Pob Aelod arall (er gwybodaeth)
Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr
Prif Swyddogion

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO:	<u>THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u>
SUBJECT:	<u>ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 12TH DECEMBER, 2019</u>
REPORT OF:	<u>DEMOCRATIC OFFICER</u>

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR M. MOORE (THE CHAIR,
PRESIDING)

- Councillors
- P. Baldwin
 - D. Bevan
 - G. Collier
 - J. Collins
 - M. Cook
 - M. Cross
 - N. Daniels
 - D. Davies
 - G. A. Davies
 - G. L. Davies
 - P. Edwards
 - D. Hancock
 - K. Hayden
 - S. Healy
 - J. Hill
 - W. Hodgins
 - M. Holland
 - J. Holt
 - J. Mason
 - H. McCarthy, B.A. (Hons)
 - C. Meredith
 - J. Millard
 - J. C. Morgan
 - L. Parsons
 - G. Paulsen
 - K. Pritchard
 - K. Rowson
 - T. Sharrem
 - T. Smith

B. Summers
 B. Thomas
 G. Thomas
 S. Thomas
 H. Trollope
 J. Wilkins
 D. Wilkshire
 B. Willis

AND: Managing Director
 Corporate Director Social Services
 Corporate Director Education
 Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
 Chief Officer Resources
 Chief Officer Commercial
 Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
 Communications, Marketing and Customer Access Manager

<u>No.</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
1.	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
2.	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>An apology for absence was received from Councillor L. Winnett.</p>	
3.	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declarations of interest were reported:</p> <p>Councillors G. Collier, M. Cross, M. Holland & J. C. Morgan Item No. 28: Council Tax – Removal of Empty Property Discount Allowance for Prescribed Class C Dwellings.</p>	

The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance confirmed that the above-named Members may remain in the meeting whilst the item of business was discussed.

Councillor W. Hodgins

Item No. 30 – Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Performance Review 2018/19 Q4.

Councillors M. Cook & J. Hill

Item No. 36 – Future Management of the Waste Transfer Station and Household Waste Recycling Centre.

4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Congratulations were expressed to:

- 21-year-old Nicky Pepper Junior who had been awarded Young Groundsman of the Year by the Institute of Groundsmen. Nicky had been educated at Glyncoed Comprehensive School and had started out his career by cutting lawns for local people. The award was presented to Nicky by the BBC's Dan Walker.

It was also noted that Nicky Pepper Senior had also been recognised for his groundsmanship at Ebbw Vale by the Cricket League.

RESOLVED that a letter of congratulations be sent.

Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council had received the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award for its commitment to ensuring service personnel, veterans and their families were not unfairly disadvantaged when seeking employment with the Council.

The award was received on behalf of the Authority at the Armed Forces in Wales Awards at St Fagans Museum on Thursday 28th November, 2019 by Councillor Brian Thomas, the Council's Armed Forces Champion. As part of achieving the Silver Award the

Council had recently adopted a Time-off for Reservists Policy that included fifteen days paid leave for training for reservists, in addition to supporting their mobilisation.

Blaenau Gwent Council had signed the Armed Forces Covenant, reflecting its on-going commitment to the armed forces community in 2014 along with a range of civilian and military partners who the Council worked with through the Blaenau Gwent Steering Group. The Council would now be looking to achieve the Gold Award through further measures such as a guaranteed interview for all members of the armed forces community meeting the essential criteria of the post they applied for.

At this juncture, the Armed Forces Champion presented the award to the Chair of the Council and expressed his appreciation to the Leader of the Council for supporting the work of the Steering Group.

Christmas 2019: Food Bank Charity Initiative

The Council was teaming up with Unison to support the Blaenau Gwent Foodbank Network this Christmas and was asking staff to consider donating food and toiletries.

The Blaenau Gwent Foodbank Network had been helping people in crisis for over 10 years. The Network provided emergency food packages at foodbank distribution centres in Ebbw Vale, Beaufort, Tredegar, Abertillery, Brynmawr and Nantyglo.

This initiative would run from Monday, 2nd December to Thursday, 19th December, 2019 and donation points had been created for staff at the Central Depot, Civic Centre, Anvil Court, VITCC and the General Offices. Information on those items most in need at the moment had also been made available to staff via the December newsletter.

Elected Members were also welcome to donate if they wished to participate. A collection station had been set up in the Member's Lounge at the Civic Centre, where further information could be obtained.

5 – **MINUTE BOOK – JULY – NOVEMBER 2019**

23.

The Minute Book for the period July – November 2019 was submitted for consideration, whereupon:

Executive Committee – 13th November, 2019

Item No. 14 – 2019 School Performance for: End of Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 (Provisional Only)

It was noted that the second line of the paragraph two should be amended to read:

“The Corporate Director Education concurred with the comments and advised that schools in Blaenau Gwent was performing in line with similar schools in the South East Wales region”.

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be approved and confirmed as a true record of proceedings.

24. **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

The following question was submitted by Councillor S. Thomas, Leader of the Labour Group and responded to by Councillor N. Daniels, Leader of the Council:

Question

“Given the continuing media coverage concerning the Abertillery Learning Community, would the Leader of the Council make a statement regarding the purpose of the Executive meeting held at Mitre Street Council Offices on the 21st October, 2019?”

Response

The Leader of the Council advised that the Executive Member for Education had been contacted by some members of staff at Abertillery Learning Community asking to meet with her and specifically her Executive colleagues for a private meeting.

Supplementary Question

The Leader of the Labour Group said that the on-going situation at Abertillery Learning Community was well known in the media and stated that in the media yesterday there was a photograph of the Leader of the Council at the site with the protestors. He asked whether he stood by the statement issued by the governing body to establish a redundancy panel, working with staff and trade unions and to avoid compulsory redundancies where possible i.e.

“Did the Leader agree with the stated policy of Council and the Governing Body?”

Response

The Leader of the Council commenced by stating that with regard to the photograph of him that had been pictured in Wales on-line this had been taken as he was walking through demonstrators to attend a school governing body meeting – he had not been canvassing.

He pointed out that the extracts of what had been said above, were extracts of a private meeting of a school governing body of which he was a member. The Leader concluded by stating that he had supported the view of the governing body that evening.

25. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no questions submitted by members of the public.

26. TREASURY MANAGEMENT – MID YEAR REVIEW 1ST APRIL – 30TH SEPTEMBER, 2019

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report which detailed the Treasury Management activities carried out by the Authority during the first half of the financial year and highlighted the following salient points contained therein:

The Authority:

- Had effectively managed credit risk throughout the period, so ensuring that it had not been subjected to any financial loss as a result of the credit crisis and had maximised investment returns as far as was possible whilst managing the associated risk and minimised borrowing costs throughout the period.
- Investment returns of £35,000 had been achieved with an average interest rate of 0.55%. This was slightly below the benchmark rate of 0.57% but reflected the fact that the Authority could no longer invest in previous counterparties that paid higher rates, due to credit rating reductions. However, as the annual estimated investment was £11,000 it could be seen that this had been exceeded at the half year position.
- An average interest rate of 0.85% had been paid on temporary borrowings against a benchmark of 1.00% amounting to £259,000. The estimate for interest paid on short term borrowing was £428,000 for a full year.
- It was noted that due to an expected increase in borrowing levels, every local authority had to fundamentally reassess how to finance their external borrowing needs and the financial viability of capital projects in their capital programme.
- During the first half of 2019/2020 due to the advantageous borrowing rates the Authority entered into long term debt arrangements of £13m with the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) from other public authorities. These arrangements were made to either replace maturing loans or to finance capital expenditure.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the activity undertaken during the first half of the 2019/2020 financial year be noted and the record of performance and compliance achieved during the same period be accepted.

27. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL OUTTURN 2018/19 REPORT 1ST APRIL, 2018 – 31ST MARCH, 2019

Members considered the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

The Chief Officer Resources advised that investment returns of £43,004 had been achieved with an average interest rate of 0.62%. During the year the Council had converted £3m of short term debt into long term debt to replace maturing loans and to fund the remainder of its capital expenditure.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 2 be endorsed, namely that the treasury management activity undertaken during the 2018/2019 financial year be noted.

28. COUNCIL TAX – REMOVAL OF EMPTY PROPERTY DISCOUNT ALLOWANCE FOR PRESCRIBED CLASS C DWELLINGS

Councillors G. Collier, M. Cross, M. Holland J. C. Morgan declared an interest in this item and, following advice from the Monitoring Officer, remained in the meeting whilst this item was discussed.

The report of the Chief Officer Resources was submitted for consideration.

The Leader of the Council advised that the report recommended a change of the current policy to use the authority's discretionary powers to remove the level of discount in respect of dwelling that were classified as long term empty properties (Class C dwellings). The current arrangements determined that the discount of 0% be granted to Class A & B dwellings (holiday and second homes) and that a discount of 50% be granted for Class C dwellings i.e. long term empty properties.

It was noted that empty properties i.e. properties that were unoccupied and were substantially unfurnished were initially exempt from Council Tax for up to a period of 6 months. A property was considered to be 'long term empty' if it had been unoccupied

and unfurnished for more than six months and did not quality for another class of exemption from Council Tax.

As at 30th September 2019, 1037 dwellings in Blaenau Gwent were receiving an empty property discount. There were only 4 authorities in Wales that still awarded the 50% discretionary element of settlement from Welsh Government which took into account Class C, however, it was expected that Welsh Government would amend the funding calculation for 2020/21 onwards so that the Council Tax Base calculation would no longer take into account the discounts for the property class. Should this amendment be made this could result in a reduction in Council funding of £480,000.

The Leader continued by stating that the change in policy would allow the Council to levy circa £650,000 council tax against Class C dwellings. However, this would be offset by the loss of revenue support grant circa £480,000 if the expected change to the current formula used for distribution of unhypothecated funding was implemented. Subsequently the net effect of the policy change was an additional £170,000 income for the council, based on a 100% collection rate.

The Leader of the Labour Group in seconding the proposal said he hoped that this collection rate could be achieved.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the current discount for Class A, B & C dwellings be set at 0% with effect from 1st April, 2020.

29. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY & BRIDGING THE GAP

Members considered the joint Officers' report.

The Chief Officer Resources spoke in detail to the report which provided an assessment of the Council's financial position over the next 5 years together with the proposed approach that the Council would take to address the financial challenges. The following salient points contained therein were highlighted:

- Appendix A of the report proposed the approach to be taken to respond to the financial challenges. This would be an iterative process and one that would be developed and refined as the Welsh Government funding settlement became clearer and strategic business reviews were further developed and implemented.
- Due to the General Election, Welsh Government had delayed the announcement of the draft local government settlement to 16th December, 2019 with the final settlement due on 25th February, 2020. This delay had implications for the 2020/2021 budget setting process and planning for the actual budget cuts required to set a balanced budget. Therefore, the Council's current Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) contained a number of assumptions which impact on the level of its income and expenditure.

Councillor P. Baldwin joined the meeting at this juncture.

- Based on these assumptions a budget gap of £16.2m over the next 5 years was forecast.
- The Strategic Business Reviews have been progressing (detailed at Appendix 1) and the overall financial achievement towards the budget gap was currently assessed as between £5.4m and £7.9m over the period of the Strategy. It was noted that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee had considered the MTFS and Strategic Business Reviews at a recent meeting.
- Based on the current estimated achievement from the Strategic Business Reviews compared to the budget gap identified in the MTFS there was a residual funding gap of between £8.3m and £10.8m over the next 5 years. For the next financial year 2020/2021 this residual funding gap was between £1.1m and £1.7m.
- For 2020/2021 additional proposals were being developed across portfolios to mitigate the possible residual funding gap should they be required – further information would be known following the announcement of the draft local government settlement.

Budget Papers - the Leader of the Labour Group referred to the delay in the announcement of the local government settlement and asked when Members could expect to receive the detailed budget papers containing the Strategic Business Reviews that were to be progressed and when the formal budget meeting of Council would be taking place as there needed to be sufficient time provided for Members to scrutinise this information.

The Chief Officer Resources confirmed that whilst details of the proposals had been presented to Scrutiny there would be a need for further work to be undertaken between 16th December (the date of the draft local government settlement announcement) and the New Year. The officer said that she anticipated that the budget report would be available to be considered by Joint Scrutiny and then Council towards the middle to the end of January 2020 and predicted that the Council Tax Setting meeting would take place towards the end of February 2020.

School Balances - a Member referred to paragraph 6.6 of the MTFs where it was reported that school balances during 2018/2019 had increased overall by £774,000 and that this was attributed to the specific grants that schools received during the year. The Member continued by stating that whilst he agreed that part of this was attributed to specific grants received, he said that a large part of this overall increase could be attributed to the good work that the schools were doing in managing their budgets especially as they worked on a 3-year budget plan and Welsh Government worked on an annual plan. The Member concluded by requesting that the tremendous work undertaken by schools be recognised and noted within the document accordingly.

The Chief Officer Resources accepted that schools and school governing bodies were working hard to maintain financial resilience. The comment contained within paragraph 6.6 referred to the cumulative reserves position and pointed out that without this additional funding provided by the specific grants the cumulative balance would have reduced by the end of the year. The Chief Officer undertook to incorporate the comments referred to by the Member within the document.

Pupils Demographics - a Member referred to the increase in pupil numbers by 35 as at September 2019 and the large amount of additional funding requirement of £395,000 that had been included

as a growth item to address this and said that he anticipated that this would have been a lower figure as the cost for an additional pupil was approximately £4,000.

The Chief Officer Resources said that the information received predicted that as at end of September there would be 35 additional pupils in schools. As a result of this information it had been recognised that funding for the ISB (Individual Schools Budget) would need to be increase by approximately £385,000 and this cost pressure had been included as a growth item within the MTFS.

Conclusion - the Leader of the Council advised that the report had been considered by the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee and the Trade Unions had confirmed that they were content with the direction of travel. The concern raised in relation to the cumulative reserves were noted and the lack of scrutiny of previous reports had been addressed. It was noted that this was a fluid and proactive strategy which would be amended upon receipt of further information regarding the local government settlement. The Leader concluded by proposing that Option 1 be endorsed.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the:

- Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved.
- Forecast funding gap for the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy be noted.
- Proposals within the Strategic Business Reviews be approved.

30. **QUARTER 4 CARDIFF CAPITAL REGION CITY DEAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Managing Director and Head of Regeneration.

The Leader of the Council advised that unfortunately the information contained within the report was not timely because this had been produced in June 2019. He explained that it was hoped that further information with regard to the Metro and Metro Plus could have been reported, however it was understood that whilst this report was imminent it was unable to be published prior to the General Election. Therefore, a report on this matter would be submitted to Council for consideration early in the New Year.

Metro/Abertillery Transport Hub - the Leader of the Labour Group advised that he had previously expressed concern at Council regarding issues about the Metro/Metro Plus.

The Leader of the Labour Group referred to the discussions Special Council on 21st March, 2019 regarding the scheme at which the Leader had advised that further discussions would be taking place on this in more detail at the Cardiff Capital Region. However, he expressed his concern that this scheme was no further forward and connectivity across the whole of Blaenau Gwent was crucial – this was the barrier that was preventing people from gaining employment as they were unable to travel across and throughout the borough. Travel to industrial estates was also particularly difficult.

He said that any provision needed to be tested and there needed to be connectivity across the whole of Blaenau Gwent particularly in communities that were difficult to reach. Rail infrastructure in isolation would not solve any of the connectivity problems being experienced.

Councillor C. Meredith joined the meeting at this juncture.

He continued by expressing his concern regarding the scheme to link up Abertillery to a railway when there was already a station in a nearby locality at Llanhilleth and that other areas of the County Borough were being excluded from such a provision including the

Sirhowy Valley where there was no provision at all. Whilst he appreciated that further detail on the scheme was pending he pointed out that this was a once in a lifetime generational opportunity for Blaenau Gwent and said surely a more original scheme could have been submitted as this proposal would cost £5m which equated to £1m per mile. The Leader of the Labour Group concluded by stating that he was unable to support this proposal.

In reply to a question, the Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services advised that the Abertillery Transport Hub had been included in the list of schemes being looked as part of the City Deal Programme and would include the opening of the link between Aberbeeg and Abertillery together with associated infrastructure i.e. track, interchange and station.

The Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development stated that the issue of transport had been a problem for the valley communities for many years, therefore, the Metro could not just be about trains. This had been made clear at the Regional Transport Authority i.e. that all aspects of transport must be pursued.

The Welsh Government WelTAG Review in addition to pursuing the Metro would also be undertaking other specific pieces of work relating to all aspects of transport. It was noted that one of the main issues where concerns had been raised was the lack of public transportation to Llanfrechfa Grange. The Executive Member continued by advising that the Council's Transport Policy was also in the process of being reviewed and these proposals would be submitted for consideration in the near future.

The following concerns/comments were also raised by Members:

- The public transport infrastructure in the County Borough was diabolical and far worse than any other borough. A Member stated that young people who resided in the borough were unable to look for employment due to the lack of transport they were unable to travel out of Tredegar. He said he hoped that meetings with Welsh Government would take place regarding the transport infrastructure and local bus companies to provide transport at certain times during the day and night.

- The area was a recognised industrial gateway along the Heads of the Valleys and there was a dire need for an east to west and west to east transport link from centres of population to industrial estates and this should be pursued in order to strengthen industrial growth in the area and provide the links in order that people could access these sites.
- It was also frustrating that there was no direct rail link to Cardiff airport from the valleys. This provision would raise the profile of the airport a Member asked that this matter be raised with appropriate parties.

Valley Gateway Sites – the Leader of the Labour Group referred to the announcement in 2018 by Welsh Government regarding Valley Gateway Sites which would be awarded funding. It was noted that Parc Bryn Bach had received £500,000 and asked whether each site had received a similar amount of funding.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services confirmed that different amounts of funding were received for each site as part of a competitive process. Part of the submission for Parc Bryn Bach had been for glamping pods which had been unsuccessful. Approximately £12m had been provided across all areas and the Corporate Director undertook to provide the exact figures to the Member.

At this juncture Councillor Wayne Hodgins declared an interest in this item because he was a Board Member on Aneurin Leisure Trust and the debate that had ensued related to facilities provided by Trust.

Conclusion - the Leader of the Council said that the views expressed were cross borough issues that were being pursued. Work was on-going with the Regional Transport Authority and a number of the issues that had been raised had also been raised at the G10 Gwent Forum. In addition, the Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development would be presenting a report in the near future relating the local review of the Transport Policy.

The Leader confirmed that when meetings had taken place with Ken Skates, Minister for Economy & Transport or a representative

	<p>of Welsh Government, strong representations regarding connectivity and transportation had been made by senior officers, the Leader and Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development. Discussions had also taken place regarding the provision of rail services to certain other areas which had received more than a favourable hearing.</p> <p>Unfortunately, due to the pre-election period for the General Election further information had not been forthcoming but with the onset of Tech Valleys, the Industrial Strategy and the improvements being made to the Heads of the Valleys Road, Blaenau Gwent had the potential to be a hotspot for industry. The Leader concluded by stating it was, therefore, imperative that the transport infrastructure within the County Borough including the infrastructure on the industrial estates needed to be appropriate in order that people both inside and outside the borough could access jobs and a considerable amount of work was being undertaken by officers in respect of this issue.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed and the overall progress and completion of the key targets for 2018/19 be endorsed.</p>
31.	<p><u>DEMOCRATIC ARRANGEMENTS AND SCRUTINY PROGRESS REPORT</u></p> <p>The report of the Service Manager Performance and Democratic was submitted for consideration.</p> <p>The Chair of the Democratic Services Committee commended the excellent report and said that the Service Manager Performance and Democratic was an exceptional officer.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Democratic Arrangements and Scrutiny Progress be noted.</p>

<p>32.</p>	<p><u>TIME OFF FOR RESERVISTS POLICY</u></p> <p>Members considered the report of the Head of Organisational Development.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council advised that although the Council had received the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award the policy in respect of Time Off for Reservists still had to be formally agreed.</p> <p>Councillor Brian Thomas, Armed Forces Champion had put a considerable amount of work into this and had represented the Council at these events and meetings exceedingly well. The Leader, thereupon, wished to place on record his appreciation to Councillor Thomas for all the work he had undertaken in his role as Armed Forces Champion.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Time Off for Reservists Policy be ratified.</p>
<p>33.</p>	<p><u>REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN – PREFERRED STRATEGY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services.</p> <p>The Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development spoke to the report which sought approval of the replacement Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy which was to be taken forward for consultation. This was a key document in the process and it set out the strategic framework for the new replacement Local Development Plan.</p> <p>To build consensus on the preferred strategy extensive engagement had taken place with stakeholders including Members and all comments as part of this process would be considered.</p>

The intention was to undertake a 6-week public consultation exercise on the Preferred Strategy, the results of which would be reported to Scrutiny and Council at a later date.

The Executive Member concluded by expressing his appreciation to officers for the work undertaken to date in respect of this plan.

The Leader of the Labour Group said that this was an excellent piece of work and paid tribute to officers for the amount of work undertaken in respect of the strategy. He concluded by endorsing the recommendation.

Settlement Classes - Primary & Secondary - a Member referred to a recent development in Tredegar where 500 houses had been built because there had been a number of suitable sites available. However, moving forward the Member said that there was a need to identify sites and areas where people wanted to live as this was a far more important aspect than the number of dwellings.

Challenge 3: Improving Education and Skills - the Member continued by referring to the Key Challenges and Drivers within the document in particular Challenge 3 – Improving Education Attainment Skills which indicated that “a high proportion of adults had no qualifications and education attainment was generally low”. He expressed his concern that this was too much of a general statement and pointed out that education in Blaenau Gwent primary and secondary schools was progressing well and this needed to be recognised.

The Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development said that whilst there was a need for Welsh Government system to be holistic, the guidelines issued by Welsh Government on housing were just guidelines and all sites would be looked at across the County Borough.

With regard to educational attainment, the Executive Member reported that Blaenau Gwent had recently won a national award for its Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme and confirmed that there would be recognition of educational achievements/attainments included within the Local Development Plan.

	<p>Challenge 5 – Creating a Well Connected Network of Communities - a Member said that there was a need to publicise good news i.e. that the infrastructure and road links within the County Borough had and were continuing to improve.</p> <p>Challenge 4 – Population Growth and Improving Housing Offer - a Member referred to the aging population within the County Borough and said that there was a shortage of bungalows in particular, to meet housing requirements. He also pointed out that there was a need to ensure developments contained a mixture of house types including social housing.</p> <p>The Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development confirmed that this need had been recognised and was being highlighted and discussed with registered social landlords and private developers.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely the Preferred Strategy be approved for public consultation.</p>	
34.	<p><u>MEMBERSHIPS REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to:</p> <p><u>Aneurin Bevan Community Health Council</u> the appointment of replacement representatives for Councillors Julie Holt and Mandy Moore.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that Councillor Phillip Edwards be appointed to one of the above vacancies on the Aneurin Bevan Community Health Council.</p>	

<p>35.</p>	<p><u>EXEMPT ITEM(S)</u></p> <p>To receive and consider the following reports which in the opinion of the proper officer were exempt items taking into account consideration of the public interest test and that the press and public should be excluded from the meeting (the reason for the decision for the exemption was available on a schedule maintained by the proper officer).</p>
<p>36.</p>	<p><u>FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF WASTE TRANSFER STATION AND HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE</u></p> <p>Councillor M. Cook and J. Hill declared an interest in this item and left the meeting whilst it was discussed.</p> <p>Councillor H. McCarthy left the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Managing Director.</p> <p>The Managing Director provided an overview of the report which presented the findings of the due diligence activity commissioned to consider the transfer of assets and liabilities of the company back to Council control and to seek approval on the process to secure a suitable arrangement for the services required by the Council.</p> <p>It was noted that a briefing on the report had been provided to both political groups and this report had been considered by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee on 5th December, 2019.</p>

Councillor H. McCarthy returned to the meeting at this juncture.

Further details of the financial and technical issues were provided including operating losses, the provision for aftercare and the potential cost pressure if the preferred option was pursued. It was noted that the aftercare liabilities would remain with the company until 2044 and following this date would then subsequently be transferred to the Council and remain until 2076.

A working group comprising of a cross section of officers from across the authority had undertaken a robust piece of work and a synopsis of this process was provided in paragraphs 2.24 – 2.27 of the report and a more detailed description of the process was included within Appendix 1.

Correction – Appendix 2 – reference was made within Appendix 2 and for clarification it was reported that the company did pay the National Living Wage and that the Council paid the Foundation Living Wage (at the higher level). However, this correction would not affect the differentiation reported to Council.

The Managing Director advised that details of the preferred option were outlined in paragraph 3.6.2. It was pointed out that the word ‘Scrutiny’ contained in the second bullet point should be amended to read ‘Council’. It was noted that the Scrutiny Committee had supported the preferred option on 5th December, 2019.

Contingency Plan - in reply to a question, the Managing Director confirmed that if there was not sufficient interest from public sector partners to take forward the preferred option, the contingency plan for the delivery of services would be submitted to Council to agree.

Carbon Footprint - in reply to a further question, the Managing Director said that the Council’s carbon footprint and the impact this would have to be at the forefront of all decisions that were made in the future. Whilst there were no specific targets imposed by Welsh Government and the Council could not be fined at this stage this may potentially change in the future as the ambition of Welsh Government was for the public sector to become carbon neutral by 2030.

	<p>It was noted that the Well Being Future Generations Act also included environmental elements that would need to be adhered to.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report which related to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority) be accepted and Option 1 – Collaboration with the Public Sector (Shared Services) be endorsed, namely that approval be granted to proceed to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take forward Option 1 and carry out soft market testing to better understand the opportunity to achieve a public sector collaboration. - Should there not be sufficient interest from public sector partners to take forward the preferred option it was requested that Council endorse a proposal for officers to develop a contingency plan for the delivery of services. - To mitigate against the risks associated with depleting the general reserves that should be retained to cover the costs associated with the aftercare liabilities of the landfill site it was proposed that the Council explored options for securing sufficient reserves to meet the assessed costs and liabilities up to 2076.
<p>37.</p>	<p><u>COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER PROCESS, SLECTION OF APPROVED USER</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p>

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services.

The Executive Member for Environment spoke briefly to the report which set out the result of the re-assessment of information by the Selection Panel provided in support of an appeal by an organisation relating to the proposed Community Asset Transfer.

It was noted that the information submitted to support the appeal process had been re-assessed against the published evaluation criteria by the same representatives of the Council's Community Asset Transfer Steering Group who had assessed the original business case. In addition, an assessment of the original and revised scoring had been reviewed and re-scored independently. The Executive Member for Environment concluded by proposing that Option 1 be endorsed.

Evaluation Matrix - a Member referred to the evaluation matrix that had been used and expressed his concern that organisations were not able to supply any historical information. He, therefore, questioned how this could then be classed as a track record if only the forward looking information was supplied. He also expressed his concern that both organisations had scored the same in terms of the financial issues which was not correct. The Member concluded by stating in his opinion the matrix was flawed.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services said that the weighting in terms of the track record had been quite low. With regard to the track record - the point was not whether clubs had fulfilled particular fixtures, it was a look forward rather than a look back at historical information. He reiterated that an independent assessment of the scores had been undertaken. The Corporate Director concluded by pointing out that both organisations had equal opportunity to supply further information in support of their applications.

A Member said that this was one of the saddest days and in his view the Council had failed in a number of areas. The Charter that had been signed by the Council and the Town Council was a legal agreement. This particular recreation ground had been left to the people of Tredegar and any change to the recreation facilities must be discussed with the public and Town Council in the first instance.

However, he pointed out that these discussions had never taken place.

He continued by stating that the track records of the clubs should have been taken into consideration as priority was being given to a club who had not played one fixture on the ground. He also pointed out that the fireworks display and horse show were also held annually at the ground and enquired whether these events would be permitted as part of the lease in the future. All factors should have been considered before a decision was made and children and senior sides should be permitted to use the facilities at the ground. The Member concluded by stating he did not support the report and would, therefore, not vote in favour of the preferred option.

The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services advised that if the report was supported this was providing a route on which to engage and the Town Council would form part of that process. It was noted that it was the role of the Charity Commission to take a view on whether the existing charitable objects continue to be observed and take a decision accordingly. Both parties had been treated equitably and had equal opportunities to discuss and sufficient time to present the information. In addition, there had been equity for both clubs to use officer time to help with regard to the completion of the forms. In terms of protecting current user rights and activities in any future lease this would be considered.

Another Member said that the Town Council should be consulted before any decision was made.

Councillor M. Cook and J. Hill returned to the meeting at this juncture.

Town/Community Council Charter - a Member referred to the Charter between the Council and Town Council and asked whether this was a statutory and legal contractual agreement and if this was the case pointed out that the Council would be unable to make a decision if the Town Council had not been consulted with.

The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance advised that investigations would take place as to whether there was a legal obligation to consult with Town Council as part of the Charter

	<p>arrangements on the proposal and pending this information suggested that the report be deferred and re-presented to Special Council the following week.</p> <p>A Member pointed out that in the event the Town Council had not been consulted, it should have been consulted with as part of the Community Asset Transfer process. He, thereupon, posed the following questions/comment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Had the Council consulted with the Town Council in respect of the proposal. - Was it a legal obligation under the Charter to consult with Town Council. - If it was a legal obligation this consultation should have taken place prior to Council making a decision on the proposal. <p>The Leader of the Council said that he would support deferment of the report. He referred to the CAT process and the passion that the Tredegar Members had for the ground and said that he sympathised with them on this particular issue. He concluded by stating that he hoped that a solution could be found for this ground as the Council was no longer providing services for the facility.</p> <p>A discussion ensued when it was</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be deferred pending further information and re-submitted to the Special Meeting of the Council on 19th December, 2019 for consideration.</p>
<p>38.</p>	<p><u>APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE – JNC OFFICERS</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 & 13 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p>

	<p>Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 15th October, 2019.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the appointment of Leanne Roberts to the post of Service Manager Customer Experience & Benefits be noted.</p>	
<p>39.</p>	<p><u>SHORTLISTING – JNC OFFICERS</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 & 13 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 21st October, 2019.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the decision contained therein be noted.</p>	
<p>40.</p>	<p><u>APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE – JNC OFFICERS</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 & 13 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p>	

	<p>Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 8th November, 2019.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the decision not to appoint to the post of Service Manager Transformation & Digital at this stage be noted.</p>
<p>41.</p>	<p><u>APPEAL COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 & 13 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 12th November, 2019.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the Appeal be dismissed.</p>

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO:	<u>THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u>
SUBJECT:	<u>SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 19TH DECEMBER, 2019</u>
REPORT OF:	<u>DEMOCRATIC OFFICER</u>

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR M. MOORE (THE CHAIR,
PRESIDING)

Councillors D. Bevan
 G. Collier
 J. Collins
 M. Cook
 M. Cross
 N. Daniels
 D. Davies
 G. A. Davies
 G. L. Davies
 P. Edwards
 D. Hancock
 K. Hayden
 S. Healy
 J. Hill
 W. Hodgins
 M. Holland
 J. Holt
 H. McCarthy, B.A. (Hons)
 C. Meredith
 J. Millard
 J. C. Morgan
 J. P. Morgan
 L. Parsons
 G. Paulsen
 K. Pritchard
 K. Rowson
 T. Sharrem
 T. Smith
 B. Summers

S. Thomas
H. Trollope
J. Wilkins
D. Wilkshire
B. Willis

AND: Managing Director
Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
Corporate Director of Social Services
Corporate Director of Education
Chief Officer Resources
Chief Officer Commercial
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
Head of Community Services
Service Manager – Neighbourhood Services

<u>No.</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
1.	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
2.	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from:</p> <p>Councillors P. Baldwin, M. Day, L. Elias, J. Mason, B. Thomas, G. Thomas and L. Winnett.</p>	
3.	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declarations of interest were reported:</p>	

Councillors M. Cook and J. Hill - Item No. 4: Revenue Costs for Operating a Second Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) at Roseheyworth South Business Park.

The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance confirmed that the above-named Members have been advised that they may remain in the meeting and take part in any debate that may ensue in relation to this item.

4. REVENUE COSTS FOR OPERATING A SECOND HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE (HWRC) AT ROSEHEYWORTH SOUTH BUSINESS PARK

Councillors M. Cook and J. Hill declared an interest in this item and following the advice received from the Monitoring Officer remained in the meeting whilst this item was discussed.

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Community Services.

The Executive Member for Environment spoke briefly to the report which had been submitted to consider options for:

- the operational days of New Vale and the proposed second Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) in Roseheyworth; and
- the financial implications of operating a second household waste recycling centre.

At this juncture, the Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services advised that the development of a second Household Waste Recycling Centre aligned to the Council Priority 'Strong and Environmentally Smart Communities' and in particular, the objective 'to increase in recycling rates which would enable us to achieve national targets'. It was noted that the new HWRC would contribute towards achieving the Welsh Government's 70% recycling target by 2024/2025.

WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) had worked closely with Blaenau Gwent to develop a Strategic Business Case for the proposed new HWRC site at Roseheyworth which detailed

how it could address local challenges whilst responding to statutory goals.

It was noted that the Council had been successful in its bid for capital funding to the Welsh Government for the scheme with a full award of £2.8m being made available for the facility. The proposed development would also lead to highway improvements by enhancing the A467 with traffic lights on the entrance to Roseheyworth Business Park and the new site would also provide capacity to introduce re-use of household items with access to furniture and items for the community. This reuse project would provide an opportunity to work with third sector partners who could access funding schemes to improve employability and work programmes in the Borough.

Revenue Costs - with regard to revenue costs, it was reported that these costs for year 1 would be potentially lower as the result of the new facility not becoming fully operational until 1st June, 2020. Therefore, revenue costs for 2020/2021 had been modelled at 10 months.

Paragraph 3.4.1 provided details of options for funding the operational costs of the HWRC which included:

- Service Efficiency - £39,000 – there had been a number of expressions of interest for voluntary redundancy within Neighbourhood Services. A full review would be undertaken to make one service efficiency in the sum of £39,000.
- One Street Cleansing Gang - £95,400 – the opening of a new HWRC was expected to have a positive impact in the Ebbw Fach Valley, which would allow the department to reduce one Street Cleansing gang and move those staff within the operation of new facility.
- Sensitivity Analysis – two sites operational - £108,000 – a modelling exercise based on a two site strategy had been undertaken by WRAP which showed some potential performance increases – this information was quantified within paragraph 3.4.1 of the report.

Operational Days - a comparison of operational days with neighbouring authorities were detailed in paragraph 3 of the report. Three options for consideration were included with the preferred option being Option 2 i.e. Roseheyworth and New Vale HWRC's both operational 6 days a week – both sites would close on different days ensuring that the facilities would be available daily throughout the course of the week.

Short and Long Term Impact on Budget/Risk Implications Including Mitigating Actions - paragraph 5 of the report detailed both the budget implications and risks including mitigating actions. The indicative 10-month revenue costs at the new site had been modelled at £258,680 across all days of operation from 8.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.

The two site strategy approach would allow the Council to get nearer to achieving the Welsh Government's 70% recycling target as failure to expand and grow the Waste service could make the Council's recycling rate stagnate and lead to potential fines in 2024/2025 and beyond. Therefore, the operation of this new facility would help mitigate future fines and would provide improved access for residents to recycling materials and reduce fly-tipping within the Ebbw Fach Valley.

In order to mitigate the staff reduction (i.e. one member of staff) in Neighbourhood Services, an apprenticeship scheme would be developed to build long term resilience within the team. In addition, in order to continue to meet and maintain the Council's cleanliness objectives within the borough, a Cleansing Team would still be retained and deployed within each of the valleys. Additional funding had also been secured through Keep Wales Tidy to increase the number of voluntary litter picking champions.

Members were then provided the opportunity to comment/raise questions in relation to the report.

Scrutiny – the Leader of the Labour Group sought clarification as to why the report had not been submitted to the relevant Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

The Leader of the Council explained that if the report had been submitted to Scrutiny it would then have been the remit of the Executive Committee to make the decision on this matter because

under the democratic arrangements the report in its current form was not a matter for Council consideration. In addition, at the October Meeting of Council issues relating to the HWRC were discussed as part of the Capital Programme report whereby Members had expressed concern regarding the operational arrangements/revenue implications for the site and a commitment had been given that if the funding bid was successful a further report would be submitted to Council.

The Leader of the Council continued by stating that he had discussed this matter with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee who had both confirmed that they were content with the approach for the report to be submitted directly to Council for consideration. In addition, the Chair of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee had confirmed that a Joint Scrutiny Committee would not have been convened to consider the matter.

The Leader of the Labour Group referred to the Strategic Outline Case for the Development of a Second Household Waste Recycling Centre and said that it would have been his preference for this document to have been presented to Council for consideration because this original decision had been made by the minority (i.e. the Executive), which in his opinion was reprehensible. He also alluded to a statement made that this decision had been of a political nature.

Reference was made to the previous report which detailed potential opening arrangements based on the 3 and 4-day approach which in his view had been ludicrous and said he was pleased that these proposals had now been removed. However, he pointed out that Welsh Government had been unaware of this original proposal.

The Leader of the Labour Group continued by referring to the speed in which the proposal had come to fruition prior to the Christmas period but stated that this whole process was not finished for Members. The Wales Audit Office would be made aware of this because as this was part of a larger policy change it should have come before all Members of the Council. Therefore, he was unable to support the proposal as Members had not been provided with the opportunity have any input into it and also

because nowhere within the report detail was any mention made to an increase in the rate of recycling.

The Leader of the Labour Group pointed out that the mantra of the current administration had been street cleansing improvements to fulfil manifesto priorities but now this was being reneged upon. He continued by referring to the report that had been submitted to the Executive Committee in July 2017 regarding street cleansing improvements and the introduction of a fifth cleansing team which had a major impact on environmental quality and pointed out that members of the public were concerned with the cleanliness of the streets. Therefore, he reiterated that he was unable to support this proposal because Members would need to be informed of the ramifications if there was a reduction in one street cleansing gang and also the effect the new HWRC would have on other Council priorities needed to be ascertained.

He continued by also alluding to the number of schemes taking place in the Abertillery area and commented that the new HWRC “was a shiny new toy”.

The Leader of the Labour Group concluded by stating that as he was unable to support the proposal he, thereupon, proposed the following alternative recommendation:

The report be deferred to allow a Working Party of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee to scope out a piece of work to best determine the following:

1. Whether a strong enough case was made within the report to ensure that if agreed there would be a sufficient recycling rate percentage rise; and
2. Whether Members felt that the overall merits of the above were worth the loss of a street cleansing gang and the inevitable drop in street cleanliness, as detailed in the report at section 3.4.1.

The Working Party to then report their findings to an all Member Scrutiny session who, after deliberation, would make recommendations to Executive/Council.

The Leader of the Council commenced by referring to the unfortunate language that had been used in the opening address and said that he was at a loss with regard the projects that were taking place in Abertillery. He pointed out reports that required input from all Councillors to debate would be submitted to Council in order to extend the opportunity for debate within the Chamber.

He continued by referring to the Leader of the Labour Group referring to the loss of a fifth street cleansing gang and pointed out that since its inception from the second budget round he had done his best to cut the fifth gang and reduce street cleansing by £300,000. The street cleanliness was improving but pointed out that if Labour Group proposals had been approved streets would now be considerably dirtier.

The Leader of the Council referred to the results of the public survey conducted throughout the County Borough twice annually, which highlighted that street cleanliness was improving. He pointed out that if the Leader of the Labour Group was concerned about the loss of a fifth cleansing gang and the detrimental impact this may have by the opening of a HWRC, which was a much needed facility, and if there was any detrimental impact on street cleansing as a result of the loss of the fifth cleansing gang, he would be content to return to Council and recommend the gang's reinstatement.

The following questions/comments were then raised by Members:

Proposed Operational Times - a Member commenced by stating that he was pleased that the report had been presented to Council for consideration. He continued by highlighting the proposed operational opening times 8.30 a.m. – 5.30 p.m. and asked whether appropriate facilities would be provided at both the new and existing sites to ensure that these opening times could be adhered to throughout the course of the year particularly, during the winter months.

The Service Manager – Neighbourhood Services confirmed that floodlighting would be provided at both sites to ensure that residents were able to access both facilities after 4.00 p.m. especially during the winter months.

Utility Costs - a Member referred to the increasing cost of electricity year on year. Whilst details of the first year operational costs had been provided he asked what the financial implications for budget setting would be for future years.

The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services advised that appendix 3 attached to the report provided details of the estimated revenue costs for a 5-year period. This information had been modelled on the standard inflationary costs.

New Vale Site/Silent Valley - another Member commenced by stating that he was an advocate of a greener environment and reducing the carbon footprint. He pointed out that a review was currently being undertaken in respect of Silent Valley and questioned whether this should be completed prior to a decision being made on the new HWRC. He also expressed his concern regarding the future of the New Vale site (which covered two-thirds of the borough) and future budget implications and asked if a guarantee could be provided that this site would remain open.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services confirmed that the Council's Recycling Strategy and the achievement of the 70% recycling target was predicated on a two site approach and any changes to this strategy would require Council approval. The Corporate Director reiterated that from an operational perspective there were no proposals to change as it was believed that two sites were required to achieve the recycling targets. It was noted that only marginal gain would be achieved as the Council became closer to achieving the 70% target.

With regard to the service provider and the question of who would operate the two sites, this was not a matter for current consideration – the two issues were not interlinked at this stage.

Carbon Footprint - a Member referred to the previous comment made regarding the carbon footprint and pointed out that the distance currently from the far end of the County Borough to the New Vale site was 5 miles. When the new site became operational in addition to reducing the carbon footprint for residents residing in the Ebbw Fach Valley, it would also generate additional income from recycle and this combined with the total cost of collecting fly tipping could potentially offset the operational cost of the new HWRC.

The Leader of the Labour Group referred to the Welsh Government funding and said that there were some questions whether the Council had been open and transparent in terms of its original proposal approach for the operational days i.e. 3 – 4 days.

Fly Tipping - a Member expressed his concern that there was an issue of fly tipping across the County Borough and one of the major hotspot areas was Hilltop Mountain. He also referred to the review of Silent Valley that was currently being undertaken and also said in his opinion the findings of that review should be received initially before a decision was made in respect of the new HWRC.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services reiterated his earlier comment that at present the question around who operated the sites did not predicate the number of HWRC sites. Details of the infrastructure were required in the first instance and the site operators would then be determined in the future.

Public Engagement - A Member referred to the amount of public engagement taking place and was optimistic that the public was embracing the necessity for recycling.

At this juncture, the Executive Member for Environment proposed that Option 2 be endorsed.

The Leader of the Labour proposed the following amendment:

The report be deferred to allow a Working Party of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee to scope out a piece of work to best determine the following:

- 1. Whether a strong enough case was made within the report to ensure that if agreed there would be a sufficient recycling rate percentage rise; and**
- 2. Whether Members felt that the overall merits of the above were worth the loss of a street cleansing gang and the inevitable drop in street cleanliness, as detailed in the report at section 3.4.1.**

The Working Party to then report their findings to an all Member Scrutiny session who, after deliberation, would make recommendations to Executive/Council.

	<p>A recorded vote was requested and taken:</p> <p>In Favour of the Amendment outlined above:</p> <p>Councillors D. Bevan, M. Cross, K. Hayden, H. McCarthy, J. C. Morgan, T. Sharrem, T. Smith, S. Thomas, H. Trollope, D. Wilkshire, B. Willis.</p> <p>In Favour of Option 2 (Preferred Option) – Councillors G. Collier, J. Collins, M. Cook, N. Daniels, D. Davies, G. A. Davies, G. L. Davies, D. Hancock, S. Healy, J. Hill, W. Hodgins, M. Holland, J. Holt, C. Meredith, M. Moore, J. P. Morgan, L. Parsons, G. Paulsen, K. Pritchard, K. Rowson, B. Summers, J. Wilkins.</p> <p>Councillors P. Edwards and J. Millard abstained from voting.</p> <p>The proposed amendment was, therefore, not carried.</p> <p>Councillor J. C. Morgan left the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>Appreciation was expressed to the representatives of WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) and officers for the tremendous amount of work undertaken in respect of the scheme and to Welsh Government for the provision of funding.</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 2 be endorsed, namely Roseheyworth and New Vale HWRCs both operational 6 days a week, the draft revenue estimate to operate the proposed new site in 2020/21 was £204,530.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p><u>COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER PROCESS, SELECTION OF APPROVED USER</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p>	

RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services.

The Executive Member for Environment explained that the report set out the result of the re-assessment of information by the Selection Panel provided in support of an appeal submitted to the proposed Community Asset Transfer (CAT) of Tredegar Recreation Ground.

It was noted that this report had been deferred from the previous Council meeting held on 12th December, 2019 pending further information in respect of the following questions which had been posed:

- Had the Council consulted with Tredegar Town Council regarding the CAT?
- Had the Council followed legal practice in terms of consultation?
- Was there a covenant agreement relating to the site?
- Could additional provision be built into the lease to provide protection to other user groups using the ground?

The Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services confirmed that general consultation regarding the Community Asset Transfer had been happening since 2017. In addition, the Council had formally written to Tredegar Town Council in February 2019 asking if it would consider the potential CAT of this ground. This correspondence had been discussed at a meeting of the Town Council and the Town Council had responded that it would not be interested in assuming responsibility for the facility at this time.

In terms of the Charter agreement between the Council and Town Council, this was not a legally binding agreement enforceable in law but was a statement of intention that outlined good practice. Therefore, the Charter agreement had not been contravened.

With regard to the covenant on the land, it was confirmed that the land would not be given away but would be retained in charitable trust and additional wording could be built into the lease to ensure that the successful organisation:

- Actively promoted the use and enjoyment of the Premises for leisure and community uses for the benefit of the local community and public at large and actively to encourage others to use the Premises (or parts of the same) not then being used by the Tenant.

The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance referred to the definition of a legal agreement (a legally binding contract enforceable in a court of law) and confirmed that the Charter was classed as a 'statement of intention' entered into by the Council and the Town Council which formally recorded how it would operate and the intended behaviour of both parties. Therefore, the Charter was not legally enforceable.

A Member expressed his concern that no consultation had taken place whatsoever in respect this CAT proposal involving these groups. A full consultation should have involved the Town Council and County Borough Councillors who had not been involved in any aspect of the consultation process.

The Corporate Director confirmed that Members were part of the decision making process in respect of the CAT. At this stage a decision had not yet been taken and, therefore, there was no proposal to take forward to consult on. He concluded by stating that Tredegar Town Council had been consulted with in terms of the CAT proposals.

The Leader of the Labour Group commenced by stating the Town Council had indicated that they would consider the CAT if the process did not reach a conclusion. He pointed out that Tredegar Members had envisaged an all-encompassing sporting facility in Tredegar and unfortunately this report did not provide for that. Therefore, he would be unable to support the proposal and would abstain from voting. He concluded by stating that Members should have been involved at the initial stages of these discussions as they had could have assisted, particularly as they had good connections to both organisations.

Another Member supported the views of the Leader of the Labour Group but said that he was pleased to hear that the lease could be strengthened for other users of the facility because the more the ground was used, the greater its longevity. He requested that should the CAT become unsuccessful at a future point that there be an early intervention period whereby Members were consulted and other unsuccessful organisations offered the opportunity to take over the CAT of the ground.

The Leader of the Council made a statement in respect of the process that had been implemented with regard to CAT which had commenced in August 2017 and said that all parties had been made aware of CAT, the purpose of it and the process. He pointed out that in excess of 95% of the grounds had been dealt with and in the most part clubs were working together, efficiently, effectively and in a business like fashion for sport in their areas.

If the process had been broadened to encompass others parties less than 10% would have been achieved in 2 years and the CAT would have been nowhere near completion. It was noted that £500,000 savings had been attributed to the CAT process. The Leader of the Council concluded by pointing out the option was available for the Labour Group to submit an amended proposal in respect of this matter.

The Leader of the Labour Group reiterated that he had envisaged a Tredegar Sporting facility and, therefore, the whole of the Labour Group would abstain from voting on the option.

The Executive Member for Environment proposed that Option 1 be endorsed.

A vote was thereupon, taken in respect of Option 1 and it was

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report which related to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority) be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely:

- The Council, acting as Charitable Trustees note the outcome of the appeal and the re-assessment process detailed in paragraph 2.8 and offered the Community Asset Transfer of

Tredegar Recreation Ground to the successful applicants named therein, subject to:

- a. Granting a three-month licence/Tenancy at Will to permit the operation of the ground to the successful organisation.
- b. Advertising the proposed leasehold disposal detailed in earlier reports in line with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

The following Members abstained from voting:-

Councillors D. Bevan, M. Cross, K. Hayden, H. McCarthy, J. Millard, T. Sharrem, T. Smith, S. Thomas, H. Trollope, D. Wilkshire, B. Willis.

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: PLANNING, REGULATORY &
GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE
(GENERAL LICENSING MATTERS) –
10TH DECEMBER, 2019**

**REPORT OF: LEADERSHIP AND
DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR B. SUMMERS (CHAIR)

Councillors M. Moore
G.L. Davies
D. Hancock
W. Hodgins
K. Rowson
T. Smith
B. Thomas
G. Thomas
D. Wilkshire
B. Willis

WITH: D. Thompson, Service Manager – Public Protection
L. Griffin, Team Manager – Licensing & Commercial
M. Bennett, Licensing Officer
M. Woodland, Solicitor

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 2	<p data-bbox="336 286 564 327"><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p data-bbox="336 383 1294 425">The following apologies for absence were received from:-</p> <p data-bbox="336 483 671 524">Councillor D. Bevan</p> <p data-bbox="336 530 687 571">Councillor L. Winnett</p>	
No. 3	<p data-bbox="336 633 986 721"><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p data-bbox="336 779 1299 864">There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p data-bbox="336 918 1286 1041"><u>PUBLIC PROTECTION SERVICES – DISCONTINUATION OF THE COLLABORATION WITH TORFAEN</u></p> <p data-bbox="336 1088 1302 1509">The Service Manager Public Protection advised that the report had been presented following a request made for information related to the end of the collaboration with Torfaen and the implications for the Licensing Service. The Service Manager provided an overview of the report which detailed the reason for the creation of collaboration along with current and future budget implications as well as temporary changes to the Licensing Team since the joint working arrangement ended for Licensing in the summer.</p> <p data-bbox="336 1561 1302 1809">The Service Manager referred Members to the current cost pressure as a result of the end of the collaboration which was approximately £35,000 and advised that this had been met by reduced hours in a Trading Standards post that became vacant and which worked across both teams in Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<p>The Service Manager further referred to the cost pressure for 2020/2021 of £106,000 and advised that although the reduced hours post achieved £18,000 there was a need for the service area to find the remainder of the cost pressure. Before addressing the cost pressure, the Service Manager has been tasked with a review of Front Line Enforcement Services, which was ongoing. The outcome of this review would help to inform the necessary service change and staff restructure in Public Protection. If staff numbers were to be reduce, this would be dealt with in full consultation with staff, OD and trade unions. The Service Manager continued that although there are budget pressures, the Public Protection Service would still be asked for service growth.</p> <p>The Service Manager further confirmed that although interim changes had been made in the management of the Licensing Team there had been no changes in the number of operational staff in the Licensing Service as a result of the termination of the collaboration with Torfaen.</p> <p>A Member referred to the review of front line staff and raised concerns around the possibility of staff reductions in Public Protection. The Member felt that a reduction in staff would have a detrimental impact on the service provided. The Public Protection Team on the ground was critical and would not be as robust if staff were reduced. The Member referred to recent convictions for counterfeit goods and reiterated his concerns as staff had done an excellent job and he would not want to see financial pressure reduce the exceptional service provided by the Authority.</p> <p>The Service Manager Public Protection concurred with the concerns raised and had hoped that the review would minimise the impact on the frontline service. However, the Service Manager stated that the joint working/shared management arrangements with Torfaen had served to protect the frontline services of the last 3-4 years. If the collaboration had not taken place, the front line services would have significantly reduced during that 3-4 year period.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<p>Another Member stated that from an elected representative's point of view it was far more advantageous to have the expertise of a Licensing Team in house. The Service Manager Public Protection noted the concerns and advised that a number of aspects of Public Protection had been outsourced due to budgetary cost pressures over the last few years (e.g. Animal Health & Pest Control) and therefore if budgetary pressures continued then collaboration in relation to Licensing may have to be considered in the future.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>TAXI AND OTHER NON-PRESCRIBED LICENSE FEES 2020/2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Commercial and Licensing.</p> <p>The Team Manager Commercial and Licensing spoke to the report which outlined the proposed licence fees for the period 1st April, 2020 to 31st March, 2021. The Team Manager further explained the process for the review and calculation of the fees which related to scrap metal dealers, sex establishments, street trading and taxis as detailed in the report and accompanying Appendices.</p> <p>The Team Manager referred to proposed fees for taxis and explained that these were based on full cost recovery basis associated with costs for 2020/21 as well as a recovery element for the reduced charge in 2019/20. It was added that once feedback from the consultation with traders had been received a further report would be presented to Committee for consideration.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<p>A Member raised concerns around the impact any increased charges would have on businesses and residents due to poor public transport links in some areas of Blaenau Gwent and therefore residents relied on taxis. The Licensing Service provided a good source of income for the Authority and the Member felt that increased charges could have a detrimental effect on this income.</p> <p>The Team Manager Commercial and Licensing advised that the fee income was not supporting any other services across the Authority (other than direct support services as outlined in the report) and the report had proposed fees on full-cost recovery basis. The fee to be put forward for consultation was a decision for this Committee. The Service Manager Public Protection added that the cost recovery was the key element promoted in the new Corporate Commercial Strategy.</p> <p>Another Member also advised that residents within his Ward relied on taxi due to poor public transport links in Blaenau Gwent and also stated that there was an issue with 'ghost' taxis who undercut licenced taxis.</p> <p>In response to 'ghost' taxis operating in Blaenau Gwent, it was advised that no recent reports of such taxis had been received and if these were in operation they should be reported to the Licensing Team to investigate and take the appropriate action.</p> <p>The Chair referred Members to the options for consideration and a discussion ensued around Option 1. A Member felt that although he supported Option 1 he would not support an increase in licence fee charges. The Solicitor reiterated that the options presented were only seeking approval to proceed to consultation and a further report would be presented to approval fees.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<p>Upon a vote being taken it was thereupon</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the consultation exercise on the proposed fees as outlined in the report for 2020/21 be approved.</p> <p>Councillor Tommy Smith requested that it be recorded that although he supported option 1 he would not support any increased charges in licensing fees. The Team Manager Commercial and Licensing reiterated that feedback from the consultation with traders would be presented to Committee for due consideration.</p>	

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO:	<u>THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u>
SUBJECT:	<u>STATUTORY LICENSING COMMITTEE – 10TH DECEMBER, 2019</u>
REPORT OF:	<u>LEADERSHIP AND DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER</u>

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR B. SUMMERS (CHAIR)

Councillors M. Moore
 G.L. Davies
 D. Hancock
 W. Hodgins
 K. Rowson
 T. Smith
 B. Thomas
 D. Wilkshire
 B. Willis

WITH: D. Thompson, Service Manager – Public Protection
 L. Griffin, Team Manager – Licensing & Commercial
 M. Bennett, Licensing Officer
 M. Woodland, Solicitor

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from:-</p> <p>Councillors G. Thomas, D. Bevan and L. Winnett.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>STATUTORY LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 13th November, 2019.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the decision of the Sub-Committee to grant the Licence in respect of The Looking Glass, 10 Castle Street, Tredegar be confirmed.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>GAMBLING HYPNOSIS & FILM CLASSIFICATION LICENCE FEES 2020/2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Commercial and Licensing.</p> <p>The Team Manager Commercial and Licensing spoke to the report which related to licensing fees for period of 1st April, 2020 to 31st March, 2021 and provided a detailed overview of the information contained therein. The Team Manager also explained the gambling, hypnosis and film classification fees as outlined in the report and accompanying Appendix 1.</p> <p>The Team Manager informed Members that consultation would be undertaken with traders and once that had been completed a further report would be presented to Committee for consideration.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the consultation exercise for the proposed fees as reported be approved.</p>	

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: PLANNING, REGULATORY & GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE – 13TH DECEMBER, 2019

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR B. SUMMERS (CHAIR)

Councillors D. Bevan
W. Hodgins
J. P. Morgan
K. Pritchard
K. Rowson
T. Smith
B. Thomas
B. Willis

WITH: Service Manager, Development & Estates
Team Manager, Building Control & Development Plans
Team Manager, Built Infrastructure
Team Leader, Development Management
Principal Project Officer
Team Leader Building Control
Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities
Solicitor Commercial Services

AND: Public Speaker
Elle Morgan – Application No. C/2019/0269
Change of Use from former butchers to bar and restaurant
with internal adaptations and 3 No. external lights.

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received for Councillors M. Moore, G.L. Davies, L. Winnett, D. Wilkshire and D. Hancock.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillors T. Smith and B. Willis declared an interest in the following item on the grounds of pre-determination.</p> <p>Item No. 8 Planning Applications Report – Application No. C/2019/0269 – 10 Castle Street, Tredegar</p> <p>The Service Manager Development & Estates explained that the quorum for the Committee was 8 Members. However, 2 Members had declared an interest in the application which meant that the Committee would become inquorate while the application was being considered, and no formal decision could be taken. It was therefore agreed that the application be deferred.</p> <p>RESOLVED accordingly.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE INFORMATION – QUARTER 2 JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2019</u></p>	

	<p>The Committee considered the report of the Service Manager Development & Estates.</p> <p>The Service Manager presented the performance information for Quarter 2 for the period July to September 2019. Performance remained consistent and Blaenau Gwent was in joint second position in Wales for planning applications determined 'on time'. Table 2 on page 8 of the report showed that Blaenau Gwent was in 10th position in terms of the average time taken to decide applications, and the Officer said he would like to see improvement on that position. Table 3 showed the rank positions of LPA's taking decisions contrary to Officer recommendation, and Blaenau Gwent was ranked 22nd with 33%. This figure was very high and above the Wales average.</p> <p>In response to a Member's comments regarding the number of decisions taken against Officer recommendation, the Officer acknowledged that planning decisions were never 'clear cut'. However, he expressed concern that this figure was consistently high for the Council given the volume of applications received, and needed to be looked at.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>BUILDING CONTROL ACTIVITY FOR JANUARY 2019 – OCTOBER 2019</u></p> <p>Members considered the report of the Team Manager Building Control & Development Plans.</p> <p>The Team Manager presented the report which outlined the work of the Building Control Team, covering work such as building regulation applications, enforcement/unauthorised development and dangerous</p>	

structures, and made comparisons with work undertaken the previous year (2018) for the same timeframe. The report also set out general management changes, and changes to regulations and performance information.

The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein.

A Member asked whether the Building Control Team were providing quotes to large scale developers coming into the area, and the Building Control Officer confirmed that developers were contacted at the pre-planning stage to see if they were interested in procuring Blaenau Gwent CBC building control work.

The Service Manager Development & Estates also confirmed that a price match guarantee was offered to Developers, and Planning Officers were also promoting building control services when meeting with Developers at preliminary enquiries etc.

A Member referred to the number of dangerous structures and asked whether this included damaged street-lighting columns as a result of car accidents.

The Officer said these type of incidents would be included in the figures for the number of 'call-outs'. He confirmed that a Building Control Officer would respond to an incident, and determine whether it should be classed as a dangerous structure.

In response to a question raised by the Chair the Building Control Officer explained that Building Notices were associated with smaller projects or changes to existing buildings, where a Building Inspector would approve the works as it progressed. Whereas a full plans application was associated with larger new developments, and

	<p>commercial or industrial buildings, and would require full details of the proposed works be submitted for approval prior to any works being carried out on site.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>APPEALS, CONSULTATION AND DNS UPDATE – DECEMBER 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Development & Estates.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
No. 7	<p><u>LIST OF APPLICATIONS DECIDED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BETWEEN 28TH OCTOBER AND 27TH NOVEMBER, 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Business Support Officer.</p> <p>In response to a question raised, the Service Manager Development & Estates explained the process for an application for a Lawful Development Certificate.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the list of applications decided under delegated powers between 28TH October and 27th November, 2019 be noted.</p>	
No. 8	<p><u>PLANNING REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Development Management.</p>	

The Service Manager – Development & Estates/Team Manager - Development Management explained the following planning applications to Members with the aid of slides:-

Application No. C/2019/0269 – 10 Castle Street, Tredegar, NP22 3DE – Change of Use from Former Butchers to Bar and Restaurant with Internal Adaptions and 3 No. External Lights

Councillors T. Smith and B. Willis declared an interest in the application on the grounds of pre-determination.

RESOLVED that the application be **DEFERRED**.

Application No. C/2019/0296 – 38 Commercial Street, Tredegar – Change of Use from Shop (Ground Floor) to Café, Replacement Shopfront and Roller Shutter and Windows to Upper Floors

The Service Manager Development & Estates presented the application which sought planning permission for the change of use of the ground floor of 38 Commercial Street, Tredegar, from a shop (A1 use) to a café (A3 use), replacement shop front and roller shutter and windows to the upper floors. The property was located within the Primary Retail area of the Tredegar District Centre, and was currently vacant, but formerly occupied by a butchers.

The Officer went through the application and highlighted points contained therein.

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED**, subject to the conditions outlined in the report of the Team Manager Development Management.

Application No. C/2019/0054 – Land Off Southern End of Lime Avenue (Opposite Aneurin Bevan Hospital) Ebbw Vale, NP23 6GL – Construction of 6 Buildings to Provide 25 Employment Units for B1 and B2 Uses, New Access Road and Junctions Off Lime Avenue and Associated Parking and Other Infrastructure

The Team Leader Development Management presented the application which sought approval for the construction of 6 employment buildings, a new access road and junction off Lime Avenue and associated car parking areas and ancillary infrastructure. The buildings would provide 35 individual employment units with a combined floor area of 4,260 metres, and would be used for B1 (research and development or light industrial) or B2 (general industrial) employment uses.

The Officer went through the application and highlighted points contained therein.

A Member referred to the area of reclaimed land adjoining the northern boundary of the site, which was allocated for mixed use development, including housing, and asked whether the proposed employment units would have a detrimental impact on any future housing developments.

In response the Officer confirmed that B1 use buildings were acceptable within a residential area, and why the decision was taken for those units to be located on the northern plateau, at the same level as Lime Avenue.

He confirmed that Environmental Health were aware of land use, and had statutory powers to deal with any noise nuisance should they arise. If an application was received for a specific use, we could analyse details of the impact, but it was difficult to do this at this stage. However, the Officer assured that B1 use was generally acceptable in

	<p>residential areas.</p> <p>The Service Manager Development & Estates pointed out that if any substantial noise was identified from a B1 use premises, they would clearly be operating outside their conditions.</p> <p>The Chair questioned the need for two entrances at the site and the Team Leader Development Management said from a planning perspective, the access arrangements at the site was acceptable. He said Highways also considered the proposed development to be acceptable in terms of the safe and efficient use of the highway network.</p> <p>The Principal Projects Officer confirmed that the access arrangements had been considered, and explained that one access junction would require a turning circle, and due to the restricted size of the site, would result in the loss of 5 units, and would also create significant traffic flow.</p> <p>A brief discussion ensued regarding the external appearance of the proposed units. The Team Leader Development Management confirmed that the proposed materials were in-keeping with other buildings on The Works site, and samples of external finishes have been requested as part of the planning conditions. However, any changes to the external materials would have to be approved, and resubmitted as part of the discharge of conditions.</p> <p>RESOLVED that planning permission be <u>GRANTED</u>, subject to the conditions outlined in the report of the Team Manager Development Management.</p>	
9.	<p><u>ANY AREAS FOR MEMBER TRAINING/BRIEFINGS</u></p> <p>The Service Manager Development & Estates confirmed</p>	

	<p>that a briefing session on HMO's (Houses of Multiple Occupation) would be held in March 2020.</p>	
10.	<p><u>ENFORCEMENT CLOSED CASES BETWEEN 26TH OCTOBER AND 28TH NOVEMBER 2019</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Development & Estates.</p> <p>A brief discussion ensued when the Team Leader Development Management clarified points raised by a Member.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority) be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
No. 11	<p><u>ENFORCEMENT REPORT</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p>	

RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Development Management, whereupon:-

Ty Shon Farm, Land r/o Glanyrafon Terrace, Bournville, Blaina

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the materials being imported to the site, and the source of the materials. The Service Manager Development & Estates confirmed that investigations were ongoing, and a response was awaited from Natural Resources Wales. He confirmed that an update would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that the report which related to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority) be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO:	<u>THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u>
SUBJECT:	<u>PLANNING, REGULATORY & GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE (GENERAL LICENSING MATTERS)</u> <u>18TH DECEMBER, 2019</u>
REPORT OF:	<u>DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER</u>

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR B. SUMMERS (CHAIR)

Councillors: W. Hodgins
K. Pritchard
K. Rowson
T. Smith
B. Willis

WITH: S. Burchell – Licensing Enforcement Officer
H. Jones – Senior Licensing Officer
M. Woodland – Solicitor Commercial Services

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<u>APOLOGIES</u> Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. Moore, J.P. Morgan, D. Wilkshire, L. Winnett.	
No. 3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & DISPENSATIONS</u> No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.	

No. 4

SCHEDULE OF APPLICATIONS FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENCES

Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.

RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Licensing and Commercial, whereupon:-

Application for a new Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Vehicle Driver's Licence

At the invitation of the Chair, the Senior Licensing Officer explained that the application before Committee was for a Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Vehicle Driver's Licence. Members were informed that the applicant had previously held a Hackney Carriage Driver's Licence on two separate occasions, the most recent Licence lapsed in 2011.

It was noted from the DBS records that the applicant had convictions for previous offences, and the applicant explained the circumstances of the offences to Members, all of which were committed a number of years ago.

The applicant informed the Committee that should she be granted a licence, she would become employed with a local taxi firm in the Nantyglo area.

Members considered the evidence, taking into account the previous convictions and the representations made by the applicant and the Senior Licensing Officer. Consideration was also given to the Council's convictions policy relating to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Licences. The Committee was of the opinion that the applicant was a fit and proper person to hold a Hackney Carriage Driver's Licence, and it was therefore

RESOLVED that the Licence be **GRANTED** for a period of 3 years.

Review of Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Vehicle Driver's Licence

The Licensing Enforcement Officer explained that the matter had been brought before the Committee to review a Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Vehicle Driver's Licence, following a complaint received from a member of the public on the 3rd November, 2019 that the Licence-holder had overcharged a customer.

The Officer explained that the complainant was a disabled 72 year old lady, and had hired the licence-holder for a journey on the 25th October, 2019 from Nantyglo to the Learning Action Centre in Ebbw Vale and a return trip. The Licence-holder had charged the lady £40 for the journey, and the lady paid £35 as this was all the money she had in her possession at the time.

The Officer informed Members that calculated on a meter the charge for the journey should have cost in the region of £19 to £22. Following the complaint being received by the Licensing Department, the Licence-holder was asked to attend an informal meeting. At that meeting the Licence-holder did not deny the charge levied against him, and added that he had travelled from Six Bells, Abertillery to pick up the fare and this was the reason for the extra charge. The Licensing Officer had explained that this was not allowed and that all fares should be recorded by the meter in the taxi, and the meter should not start until the driver picks up a fare.

The Licence-holder was then invited to attend the meeting under caution, and the Officer outlined the comments of the interview to Members. The offence outlined was that of overcharging and the Licensing Officer also stated that by not using the meter fitted to the taxi, this was also in breach of a by-law of the conditions of the Hackney Carriage Driver's Licence.

The Licensing Officer informed the Committee that the licence-holder had been issued a HCD's Licence since 2006 and since that time the Department had received complaints in 2009 and 2018.

In relation to the current complaint and the issues surrounding the fare, the Licence-holder explained to Members that he had travelled from Six Bells to Ebbw Vale, and then Ebbw Vale to Six Bells on the return journey, and as a result was 'out of pocket'. He also informed that the lady had told him that her son would be meeting her at Wetherspoon's in Ebbw Vale, however, when he arrived in Ebbw Vale the lady's son was not there to help her. He had no other comments to make other than he was not a carer who should be expected to assist people in and out of his vehicle.

The Committee considered the evidence and the representations received from the Licence-holder and the Licensing Enforcement Officer. Members expressed concern regarding the issue of overcharging and agreed that Hackney Carriage Drivers should be using meters in accordance with agreed procedures. Members were of the opinion that the licence-holder was no longer a fit and proper person to hold a Hackney Carriage Driver's Licence, and it was therefore

RESOLVED that the licence be revoked in accordance with Paragraph 6 of the Conditions of Licence, incorporating Code of Conduct, and Paragraph 3.2 of the information and guidance, including conditions related to Hackney Carriage Drivers Licences and Private Hire Vehicle Drivers Licences which stated that: "Where there is doubt about the fitness of an applicant or licence-holder, the Council will adopt a precautionary approach and may refuse the application, or revoke the licence, as the case may be".

The licence-holder was advised that he could appeal against the decision of the Committee, to the Magistrates Court, within 21 days of today's date.

Application for a new Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Vehicle Driver's Licence

It was reported that the Applicant had failed to appear before the Committee, and it was therefore

RESOLVED that the application be **DEFERRED**.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO:	<u>THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u>
SUBJECT:	<u>SPECIAL PLANNING, REGULATORY & GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE (GENERAL LICENSING MATTERS) – 14TH JANUARY, 2020</u>
REPORT OF:	<u>DEMOCRATIC OFFICER</u>

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR W. HODGINS (CHAIR)

Councillors D. Bevan
 G. L. Davies
 J. P. Morgan
 K. Pritchard
 K. Rowson
 T. Smith
 B. Thomas
 B. Willis
 L. Winnett

WITH: Ms. A. Jones – Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
(Advisor for Item No. 1.1.(a) only)
 Mr. M. Woodland – Solicitor **(Advisor for Item No. 1.1.(b) only)**
 Mrs. S. Burchell – Licensing Enforcement Officer
 Mrs. S. Jayne – Licensing Officer
 Miss. N. Griffiths – Licensing Student

AND: Mr. Simon R. Lewis – Licence Holder
 Mr. Leigh J. Edwards – Applicant

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
-----	<p><u>CHAIR</u></p> <p>In the absence of both the Chair and Vice-Chair it was proposed, seconded and unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that Councillor W. Hodgins take the Chair.</p>	
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from:</p> <p>Councillors M. Moore, B. Summers and D. Wilkshire.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
-----	<p><u>APPRECIATION</u></p> <p>It was reported that Martin Woodland – Solicitor and Advisor to the Planning, Regulatory & General Licensing Committee would shortly be leaving the Authority to take up a new post with a neighbouring authority. Members commended the phenomenal support that Martin had provided during his time at the Authority and said that he would be sorely missed.</p> <p>RESOLVED that a letter be forwarded expressing appreciation to Martin for all the support he had provided and expressing best wishes for the future in his new role.</p>	CLEB

<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>EXEMPT ITEM</u></p> <p>To receive and consider the following report which in the opinion of the proper officer was an exempt item taking into account consideration of the public interest test and the press and public should be excluded from the meeting (the reason for the decision for the exemption was available on a schedule maintained by the proper officer).</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>SCHEDULE OF APPLICATIONS FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENCES</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest, in maintaining the exemption, outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it was likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 12, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Order of Agenda – it was agreed that Application Reference Nos. 1.1(b) and 1.1(c) be heard at this juncture in the meeting.</p> <p><u>New Licence Application Reference No. 1.1 (b)</u></p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made accordingly.</p> <p>The Licensing Enforcement Officer reported that the meeting had been convened to consider a new application received for a Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Licence. The Officer provided Members with information in relation to the applicant and offences committed which had been highlighted as part of the DBS checking process and said it was, therefore, a matter for the Committee to determine whether the applicant should be granted a licence for the full period of 36-months or any other period the Committee saw fit or to refuse the application.</p>	

The Chair then invited the applicant to explain the circumstances surrounding the offences committed.

In mitigation as to the offences the Applicant stated that they were all committed when he was a juvenile and he deeply regretted the offences. Since that time he had held down a full time job – the last 13 years working as a HGV driver and did community work in his local area. He informed Members that he had a passion for driving and wanted an opportunity to help members of the community by assisting in the provision of taxi services.

The Applicant informed the Committee that should he be granted a licence he would become employed with a local taxi firm in the Abertillery area.

In reply to a question, the Applicant gave full details of the offence that was committed during 2002.

At this juncture, the Solicitor read out character references which had been received in support of the Applicant.

The Applicant and officers from the Licensing Section left the meeting whilst Members considered the application.

Following consideration by Members the Applicant was invited to re-join the meeting and at the request of the Chair the Solicitor read out the unanimous decision of the Committee as follows:

The Committee had considered the evidence placed before them and when reaching its decision, the Committee had also considered the previous convictions, the representations made by the Applicant, the Licensing Officers present at Committee, the character references and had taken into consideration matters contained within the Council's Information and Guidance Booklet including conditions relating to Hackney Carriage Driver's Licenses and Private Hire Vehicle Licenses.

The Committee unanimously agreed that the Applicant was a fit and proper person to hold a Hackney Carriage Driver's Licence and the Committee, therefore, granted the licence for a period of 36-months.

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Vehicle Licence be **GRANTED.**

New Licence Application Reference No. 1.1 (c)

The application before the Committee was made by the Applicant for a Hackney Carriage Driver's Licence. The Applicant had not previously held a Hackney Carriage Driver's Licence. Members were informed that the Applicant had failed to attend the last Committee where the application was due to be considered and Members, thereupon, allowed the application to be deferred to the next scheduled Committee on 14th January, 2020.

The Applicant had failed to attend this meeting and Members of the Committee decided that the application be withdrawn and requested that Officers notify the applicant of their decision.

Therefore, due to the non-attendance of the applicant for the second occasion it was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the application be **WITHDRAWN.**

Councillor B. Thomas left the meeting at this juncture.

Adjournment – an adjournment took place between 10.25 a.m. – 10.45 a.m.

Existing Licence Reference No. 1.1 (a) – HCD/PHVD No. 018; PHV No. 009 and PHVO No. 003

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made accordingly.

The Licensing Enforcement Officer addressed Members and informed them that she had been contacted by an officer from the Council's Home to School Contract Section. The Licence Holder held a contract with the Council to convey a pupil with special education needs to and from school. However, he had failed to make provision for suitable cover for his contract whilst on

holiday and this action was contrary to the terms of the Council contract and his licence conditions.

The Committee was advised that the Licence Holder had allowed an unlicensed driver to drive the child to school who had not been checked in accordance with the Disclosure and Barring requirements and it was alleged that these actions had also compromised the safety of a learner with special educational needs.

It was noted that all drivers must be appropriately licensed to drive a private hire/hackney carriage vehicle for hire or reward purposes. Also, prior to starting work for contracts arranged, a driver/escort must complete an advanced DBS check and have been cleared by the Education Directorate. The Council's School Transport Contract Manager had spoken to the person who had driven the vehicle on 11th November, 2019 who had confirmed to the Licensing Enforcement Officer that no current DBS check was in place for the unlicensed driver.

The Licence Holder had, therefore, been interviewed under caution for employing an unlicensed driver. During this interview the Licence Holder had not contested the offence and had provided a detailed explanation surrounding the circumstances of the offence. The officer advised that the Licence Holder had been cautioned for the offence committed, which he had accepted. It was noted that the Licence Holder had held 3 licences (driver, operator and private hire) since 2006 and since that date no complaints had been received that required addressing.

Members were advised by the Licensing Enforcement Officer that they could:

1. Revoke the current licence.
2. Take no action.
3. Allow the licence holder to retain his current licences but issue a written warning, which remained on file for duration of the licences.

The Chair then invited the Applicant to explain the circumstances surrounding the offence committed.

The Licence Holder addressed the Committee informing Members in mitigation of his actions that he did not contest the comments made by the Licensing Enforcement Officer. He had advertised for another driver and this driver (the driver of the car that day) had recently applied for a DBS check. He had completed his knowledge test and safeguarding certificate, however, he was still waiting for the DBS check to be returned when the licence holder went away on holidays – it was anticipated that the DBS check would be completed before his holiday. He realised that he had done wrong to take a chance before the application had been formally completed and had no excuse for his actions. He had not thought about the consequences because he had not wanted to let passengers down whilst he was on holiday. Also, there was a close family member who was the properly appointed escort on that home to school contract and he knew she would supervise the journey. He apologised to the Committee for his actions.

At this juncture, the Solicitor read out a character reference which had been received in support of the Licence Holder.

The Applicant and Officers from the Licensing Section left the meeting whilst Members considered the application.

Following consideration by Members, the Licence Holder was invited to re-join the meeting and at the request of the Chair the Solicitor read out the unanimous decision of the Committee as follows:

The Committee had taken into consideration representations made by the Licence Holder and the comments of the Licensing Enforcement Officer and the matters contained in the Councils information and guidance including conditions relating to Hackney carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Drivers Licences and given due consideration to the character reference that had been provided.

Members unanimously agreed that the Licence Holder remained a fit and proper person to hold a Private Hire/ Driver's Licence, Operator's Licence and Vehicle Licence but felt that the actions of the Licence Holder were irresponsible and therefore, a final written warning be issued as to future conduct. This warning would subsist throughout the current period of his licence and Members advised the Licence Holder that should he commit further offences, or have any other cause to be brought before the Committee in the future, that his licence could be revoked at that time.

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the Licence Holder be permitted to **RETAIN** his current licences but a final written warning be issued which would subsist and remain on file throughout the current duration of the licences.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: **THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**
SUBJECT: **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 18TH DECEMBER, 2019**
REPORT OF: **LEADERSHIP AND DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER**

PRESENT: **Leader of the Council/**
Executive Member Corporate Services
 Councillor N.J. Daniels (CHAIR)

Deputy Leader of the Council/
Executive Member – Environment
 Councillor G. Collier

Executive Member – Regeneration and
Economic Development
 Councillor D. Davies

Executive Member – Education
 Councillor J. Collins

WITH: Managing Director
 Corporate Director Education
 Corporate Director Social Services
 Corporate Director Community Services and Regeneration
 Chief Officer Resources
 Chief Officer Commercial
 Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
 Press Officer

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	

ITEM	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 2	<p data-bbox="240 327 469 365"><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p data-bbox="240 421 1219 459">An apology for absence was received Councillor J. Mason.</p>	
No. 3	<p data-bbox="240 508 1209 546"><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p data-bbox="240 591 1318 629">There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
	<p data-bbox="240 719 416 757"><u>MINUTES</u></p>	
No. 4	<p data-bbox="240 808 695 846"><u>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p data-bbox="240 891 1321 974">The minutes of the Executive Committee held on 13th November, 2019 were submitted; whereupon:-</p> <p data-bbox="240 1019 1342 1227">The Executive Member for Education reported an amendment to Page 20, Item 14, 2019 School Performance For: End of Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 (Provisional Only) which should read schools not authorities, as follows:-</p> <p data-bbox="240 1272 1342 1579"><i>The Executive Member for Education provided an overview of the report and advised that this was a positive report for the Authority. The Corporate Director Education concurred with the comments and advised that schools in Blaenau Gwent were performing in line with similar schools in the South East Region. The Corporate Director added that this was due to the dedication of head teachers, teachers and support staff.</i></p> <p data-bbox="240 1624 660 1662">RESOLVED accordingly.</p> <p data-bbox="240 1706 1337 1789">FURTHER RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<u>DECISION ITEMS</u>	
	<u>GENERAL MATTERS</u>	
No. 5	<p><u>CONFERENCES/COURSES</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to attendance at the following:-</p> <p><u>Armed Forces in Wales and Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Awards 28th November 2019</u></p> <p>RESOLVED that approval be granted for Councillor Brian Thomas, Armed Forces Champion to attend.</p>	
	<u>DECISION ITEMS – CORPORATE SERVICES MATTERS</u>	
No. 6	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 29TH JANUARY 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Leader/Executive Member for Corporate Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED, that the report be accepted and the forward work programme for 29th January, 2020 be noted.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 7	<p><u>THE CALCULATION OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR THE YEAR 2020/21</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report which had been presented to set the Council Tax Base for the financial year 2020/21. The Chief Officer referred to the option which sought approval to set the council tax base at 20,662.45.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Council Tax base calculation for 2020/21 as detailed in Appendix 1 tables 1 to 6 and the Council Tax base for tax setting purposes be 20,662.45 be approved.</p>	
No. 8	<p><u>CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING, APRIL TO SEPTEMBER, 2019/2020 FINANCIAL YEAR</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources provided a detailed overview of the report which outlined each portfolio's actual and forecast capital expenditure against funding approvals as at 30th September, 2019.</p> <p>The Chief Officer noted that Welsh Government had awarded 100% funding for the Household Waste Recycling Centre and as a result the Councils own resources were no longer required. Therefore, it is proposed the £520,000 be reallocated to the Capital contingency for allocation.</p> <p>In addition during 2019/20 the Council had received Welsh Government Economic Stimulus funding of £444,465. It was proposed that this funding be utilised for the Industrial Units Improvement Programme which would release £280,000 of the Council's own resources to the Capital contingency for allocation at a future date.</p> <p>The Leader welcomed the additional monies to be reallocated to the Capital contingency fund.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report be provided; • the appropriate financial control procedures agreed by Council be continued; • the budgetary control and monitoring procedures in place to safeguard Authority funding be noted; and • the funding proposals in relation to the Industrial Units Improvement Programme and Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) projects be approved. 	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING -2019/2020, FORECAST OUTTURN TO 31 MARCH 2020 (AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2019)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report which provided the forecast financial outturn position across all Portfolios for the current financial year and referred to the information related to the actions taken forward to move towards a balanced budget as detailed in the appendices. The Chief Officer noted the impact on the budget and advised that the forecast overall financial position as at 31st March, 2020 showed a small adverse variance of £7,200 against the total net budget.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources noted the reasons for adverse variances in Education and Environment and outlined the actions taken towards the favourable variance in Social Services. The Chief Officer reported that the Education Portfolio received a virement of £60,000 to assist in costs incurred for Looked After Children attending schools out of Blaenau Gwent.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>						
	<p>The Leader welcomed the good position of the budget which showed excellent budgetary control and was a good example of how CLT, and portfolio holders managed the resources allocated to the Authority. The Deputy Leader concurred with the comments raised and hoped that the position could be sustained going forward.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes was received. The action plans attached at Appendix 4 to address the forecast adverse variances as at the end of September 2019 be noted and the budget virements attached at Appendix 5 which exceeded £250,000 be approved.</p>							
No. 10	<p><u>GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The following additional grants were reported:-</p> <p><u>EBBW VALE</u></p> <p><u>Badminton Ward – Councillor C. Meredith</u></p> <table data-bbox="204 1272 1374 1312"> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td>One Life Autism Support Group</td> <td>£50</td> </tr> </table> <p><u>Cwm Ward – Councillor D. Bevan & G. L. Davies</u></p> <table data-bbox="204 1435 1374 1476"> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td>Gayden Barrass</td> <td>£200</td> </tr> </table> <p>FURTHER RESOLVED subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted.</p>	1.	One Life Autism Support Group	£50	1.	Gayden Barrass	£200	
1.	One Life Autism Support Group	£50						
1.	Gayden Barrass	£200						
No. 11	<p><u>GRANTS WORKING GROUP - 28TH NOVEMBER 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the notes of the meeting held on 28th November, 2019.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>							

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 12	<p><u>GLOBAL RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Governance and Partnership.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 namely:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the update on current participation be noted; • the continued commitment of support via the Global Resettlement Scheme proportionate to local capacity of services be approved; and • further updates of progress made under the scheme be received. 	
	<p><u>DECISION ITEMS - ENVIRONMENT MATTERS</u></p>	
No. 13	<p><u>ACTIVITIES REPORT – LITTERING AND DOG CONTROL ORDER ENFORCEMENT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2018/19</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 2 namely:- the extension of the current contract with Kingdom be approved for a further 12 months (with a 2 month notice period) subject to service and cost information that would need to be modelled as part of a wider review. (Extension of the current contract would be subject to Strategic Procurement Board approval).</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<p><u>DECISION ITEMS – REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS</u></p>	
<p>No. 14</p>	<p><u>ENERGY PROSPECTUS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.</p> <p>The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development referred to the topical stories in the media around climate change and advised that the Energy Prospectus demonstrated the proactive approach being taken by the Council to be on the forefront of the reduction of the Authority’s carbon footprint. The Executive Member expressed his thanks to officers who had produced the Energy Prospectus and commended their investigations into the available sources of energy.</p> <p>The Executive Member added that the project linked to the Bridging the Gap project and work undertaken around the Council’s Carbon Footprint by the Managing Director. The Energy Prospectus would also feed into the Refit Programme and would provide further regeneration opportunities working with Welsh Government, Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and Tech Valleys. The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development felt that there was a need for engagement with partners and constituents on the Prospectus which could be linked into the Authority’s aspirations for the new Household Waste Recycling Centre.</p> <p>In conclusion, the Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development stated that the Council was at the forefront of this significant project with some of the best officers in Wales leading on the project. He suggested a launch of the project be pursued as there were a number of opportunities to be explored in communities and with schools, businesses and residents.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<p>The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services concurred with the comments raised and also expressed thanks to Welsh Government who had supported the Authority on this journey. The Corporate Director added that the Council had worked hard and the Energy Prospectus demonstrated the Authority's commitment.</p> <p>The Leader advised that the Energy Prospectus was an excellent project and concurred that a launch would be beneficial to inform people of the work being taken forward by the Authority. The Leader referred to visits made by himself and the Executive Member for Education to School Councils in both primary and secondary schools and advised that at all these meetings pupils had raised climate change and recycling matters. It was encouraging that our younger people in communities are aware of such significant issues. An Education Centre to work with schools would be a superb initiative to be aspired to in the Authority's future plans.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 2 namely:- the energy prospectus (including associated communication plan), be approved enabling a proactive approach in the councils efforts to increase the reliance on renewable sources of energy and associated business and community energy models developed.</p>	
	<p><u>DECISION ITEMS - EDUCATION MATTERS</u></p>	
<p>No. 15</p>	<p><u>QUALITY ASSURING SAFEGUARDING IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION SERVICES (LGES)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education .</p> <p>The Executive Member for Education noted the report which outlined the revised assurance protocol for safeguarding arrangements in Local Government Education Services. The Corporate Director Education added that findings from the process was helpful and would feed into the Local Authority self-evaluation processes.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	

ITEM	<u>SUBJECT</u>	ACTION
	<u>MONITORING ITEMS - CORPORATE SERVICES</u>	
No. 16	<p><u>USE OF GENERAL AND EARMARKED RESERVES 2019/2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the attached report of and the planned forecast increase of the General Reserve to 4.58% (above the 4% target level) for 2019/2020 and future years strengthening the Council's Financial Resilience be noted. The Executive considered the impact the £0.007m forecast adverse variance for 2019/2020 would have on the General Reserve target and the challenge on budget overspends be continued along with the implementation of the appropriate service Action Plans, where required.</p>	
No. 17	<p><u>SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development.</p> <p>The Leader referred to discussions at the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee in relation to absence monitoring and from January 2020 each Scrutiny Committee would have individual directorates sickness review reporting as part of their Forward Work Programme for consideration. An overview of these reports would also feed into the Executive for discussion.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the staff sickness absence performance for 2018/19 and the proposed actions for improvement be noted.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 18	<p><u>STAFF SURVEY 2019 – SUMMARY RESULTS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the joint report of the Managing Director and Chief Officer Commercial.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
No. 19	<p><u>QUARTER 1 AND 2 (APRIL TO SEPTEMBER) JOINT FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Partnerships and Governance.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information therein be noted.</p>	
	<p><u>MONITORING ITEMS - EDUCATION</u></p>	
No. 20	<p><u>EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICES (EAS), VALUE FOR MONEY REPORT, FINANCIAL YEAR 2018/19</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
No. 21	<p><u>IMPROVING SCHOOLS PROGRAMME 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>The Executive Member for Education reported that since the publication of the report Brynmawr Foundation School had been placed in special measures following the Estyn Inspection in October. The Executive Member noted that schools in red and amber categories had made positive progress.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<p>The Corporate Director Education advised that the number of green schools had increased since 2017 with 4 schools, 8 schools in 2018 and 11 schools in 2019. The Corporate Director added that there are 2 schools in the red category, one with complex issues and these schools would continue to be supported to achieve improvements.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained in the report be considered to contribute to the continued assessment of effectiveness by making further appropriate recommendations for implementation.</p>	
	<p><u>MONITORING ITEMS - SOCIAL SERVICES</u></p>	
<p>No. 22</p>	<p><u>PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SAFE REDUCTION OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER STRATEGY 2017- 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 23</p>	<p><u>ADULTS SAFEGUARDING REPORT 1ST APRIL TO 30TH JUNE 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 24	<p><u>SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE INFORMATION FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND EDUCATION – 1ST APRIL TO 30TH JUNE 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the approach and information detailed in the report be noted.</p>	
	<p><u>EXEMPT - DECISION ITEM - REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</u></p>	
No. 25	<p><u>EBBW VALE HI TEC TEST FACILITY</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.</p> <p>The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development informed the Executive of the extensive work undertaken by the consultants and the opportunities to be explored. He noted the importance of taking forward the investigations to ascertain if there was potential for further development and advised that the next level would be to explore investment.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<p>The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services added that a meeting had been arranged with Welsh Government to discuss the programme and advised that the Tech Valleys Board had shown support for the facility. The Corporate Director referred to the various companies which had been contacted to measure interest and advised that it had been important that these initial stages had been undertaken to explore all options. If approval was received for market testing the Authority would hold all the appropriate evidence. However, the Corporate Director stated that if no positive outcome was reached from the process he would be satisfied that all options had been explored in order to seek maximum opportunities for Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>The Managing Director concurred with the comments raised and noted the good work which had been carried out by the Corporate Director. The Managing Director reiterated the importance of identifying evidence as going forward it would be required for investment. It would also show that the Council had been robust around the governance and that the Authority was taking a more proactive approach in working as a commercially minded Council.</p> <p>The Leader noted the comments and commended officers on the amount of work undertaken. The Leader felt that it would be paramount going forward that finances are monitored as part of the in-house team and also requested that financial matters was also included as part of future discussions with the Executive.</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report which contained information relating to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted and option 3, namely that market testing be agreed to identify a private sector partner and develop the scheme in partnership to a position where it could be determined whether there was a business case to proceed.</p>	

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<u>EXEMPT MONITORING ITEM - ENVIRONMENT</u>	
No. 26	<p><u>SILENT VALLEY WASTE SERVICES LTD PERFORMANCE REPORT</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Community Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report which contained information relating to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 28TH NOVEMBER, 2019**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S.C. THOMAS (CHAIR)

Councillors: K. Rowson
D. Bevan
G.A. Davies
M. Day
P. Edwards
L. Elias
K. Hayden
J. Holt
J. Millard
J.P. Morgan
T. Sharrem
T. Smith

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
Head of Children’s Services
Head of Adult Services
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. Moore and G. Paulsen.</p>	

<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 17th October, 2019 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SAFE REDUCTION OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER STRATEGY 2017-2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Children’s Services which was presented to update Members on the progress made in relation to the implementation of the Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy 2017-2020.</p> <p>The Head of Children’s Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>In response to a Member’s question regarding special guardians, the Head of Children’s Services said that special guardians were generally extended family members such as grandparents, aunts and uncles.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding the difficulties of recruiting a consultant psychologist. The Head of Children’s Services said that the psychologist role had been advertised on two separate occasions with no applicants. There was a shortage of psychologists and although the Authority were competitive with bandings, grant funding was short term.</p> <p>In relation to the CLA reduction strategy, the Chair commented that the strategy was being independently evaluated by Worcester University and enquired had the Council worked with Newport Council when developing the Supporting Change Team. The Head of Children’s Services responded that the Authority had looked at both</p>	

Newport and Gwynedd models and had chosen to follow the Gwynedd model.

A Member enquired regarding payments to special guardians and the level of care provided to break the cycle for young people to live a good life and not come back into care. The Head of Children's Services said the level of support to Special Guardians included:-

- The local authority develop a plan outlining the support given to promote a successful placement.
- Allowances to special guardians – the authority would access the financial position of the special guardian and support financially if necessary. This was then reviewed annually.
- If a placement breaks down the team would look at the child's situation and seek another family member to look after them as an alternative to coming into care.

In response to a Member's question regarding the Children's Services legal support, the Head of Children's Services said that soft market testing had been carried out with one private law company and one local authority expressed an interest in delivering future legal services for Blaenau Gwent Council. The Member enquired if there would be cost benefits to employing a Children's Solicitor rather than use costly external solicitors. The Director of Social Services commented that this piece of work had been carried out and there had been difficulties in recruiting Local Authority Child Care Solicitors. He was continuing to explore partner working with other local authorities and was awaiting any interest in supporting Blaenau Gwent in this provision.

A Member enquired why the mediation support worker post was part time. The Head of Children's Services clarified that funding only supported one part time post, however, this was in addition to the full time post already in place.

With regard to early intervention, the Head of Children's Services commented that an Education Support Worker had been established in the Supporting Change Team to offer education support for children and families for children at risk of going into care. The Families first programme

	<p>worked closely with schools to forge relationships and support children showing difficulties in school.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding the underspend in Children's Services for quarter 2, the Head of Children's Services said that one area of underspend was staffing, there was currently 8 or 9 social worker vacancies. Difficulties in recruiting externally to Social Worker posts had led to the Department to encourage internal support workers to undertake training to become Social Workers and fill vacant posts. There had also been an underspend in Independent Fostering Agencies costs as the Authority was placing fewer children with external fostering providers. With regard to Residential Placements, Children's Services received a grant of £761,000 and this had been set against the residential placement budget. A Members Briefing session was being held in November on the work of the MyST team, they worked with children in residential care to bring them back to foster care placements to improve outcomes for children and reduce pressure on the residential budget.</p> <p>A Member enquired as the number of children in residential placements was reducing, had the numbers of foster carers in Blaenau Gwent increased. The Head of Children's Services said that within the last six months there had been an increase in fostering enquiries, however, some children had been placed with extended family members and this had resulted in the reduced number of residential placements.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding the number of children in foster care to date, the Head of Children's Services confirmed that presently there were 223 children in foster care.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the information contained within the report be approved.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2019/20 (QUARTERS 1 AND 2)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Social Services which was presented to highlight</p>	

	<p>key points from quarters 1 and 2 of the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2019/2020.</p> <p>The Director of Social Services presented the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p><u>Children’s Services</u></p> <p>The Head of Children’s Services spoke on Children’s Services.</p> <p>A Member commented that it was pleasing to note that the Children’s Emotional Well-being and Mental Health initiative was in place and moving forward.</p> <p><u>Adult Services</u></p> <p>The Head of Adult Services advised Members that a co-produced Advocacy commissioning strategy for supporting vulnerable adults had been completed and the new advocacy helpline had been launched. Information leaflets would be forwarded to Members in due course.</p> <p>A Member commented that some vulnerable adults cared for children and the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) service needed to be promoted to get the message to the public. He enquired regarding the number of beds available for respite care for adults with physical disabilities in their 70’s who cared for an adult with a physical disability. The Head of Adult Services said that in Blaenau Gwent there were no respite beds for adults with physical disabilities, in these cases beds would be commissioned in other Authorities on a case by case basis to meet specialist needs.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2, namely that the report be accepted as provided.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 13TH JANUARY, 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee.</p>	

<p>The Chair advised that the Preventative Model of Service to meet future social care demand would be presented to the March Committee.</p>	
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<p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 13th January, 2020 be approved.</p>	
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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 4TH DECEMBER, 2019**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H. TROLLOPE (CHAIR)

Councillors: D. Bevan
M. Cook
G.A. Davies
W. Hodgins
C. Meredith
J.C. Morgan
K. Pritchard
K. Rowson
T. Smith
B. Summers
S. Thomas

AND: Corporate Director of Education
Service Inclusion Manager
Principal Challenge Advisor EAS
Education Welfare Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Millard, L. Elias and J. Holt.</p>	

<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 25th October, 2019 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 25TH OCTOBER, 2019</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 25th October, 2019 was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 6th November, 2019 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 6TH NOVEMBER, 2019</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 6th November, 2019 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Item 6 – Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate</u></p> <p>A Member referred to the increased demand for places at Pen-y-Cwm Special School. The Service Inclusion Manager said that the service looked at trends and the primary needs of the pupil coming into the system e.g. Autism, profound learning difficulties, etc. to project forward.</p>	

	<p>Historically it had not been possible to capture data on 0-3 year olds. The Inclusion Service managed and monitored uptake and placement at Pen-y-Cwm school and a consultation document and report was being prepared to look at increasing capacity at the school.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding out of county pupils and what areas in the borough pupils came from. The Service Inclusion Manager said that currently Pen-y-Cwm school was not accepting pupils from out of county for a range of reasons and it was reasonable that places be reserved for pupils living in Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>The Chair requested that in relation to the River Centre and Pen-y-Cwm schools that a breakdown of the numbers of children attending the schools against their catchment area schools be provided. The Service Inclusion Manager said that this information could be provided as a percentage on future reporting.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	Service Inclusion Manager
No. 8	<p><u>IMPROVING SCHOOLS PROGRAMME 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Strategic Education Improvement Manager which was presented to provide Members with an overview of those schools, over the last 3 years that have presented as a cause for concern, their progress and the work delivered to continue to support them to improve.</p> <p>The Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member referred to categorisations and commented that school categorisations could be affected if a school performed poorly in one subject area. The Director said that if it was a core subject any decline or incline would have an exaggerated impact on categorisations. Schools were trying to move away from this process as good work could sometimes be overlooked and try to make it more distributed in the way schools were categorised.</p>	

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding correspondence from the Executive Member for Education in relation to a Blaenau Gwent school. Members requested that the Executive Member for Education provide a response regarding correspondence about a meeting relating to a Blaenau Gwent School.

The Committee agreed this course of action.

In response to a Member's question regarding the condition of Brynmawr Foundation school, the Director said that the school had been identified as needing refurbishment which would include disabled access.

A Member requested that information regarding the movement of school categorisations be presented in graph form. The Director of Education agreed that this information would be presented in colour graph form in future reporting.

Director of
Education

In response to Members concerns regarding redundancies in schools, the Director said that Abertillery Learning Community had suffered some negative press attention which had not helped to recruit high quality teachers. She pointed out that a number of learning support assistants had been renewed and commented on the integral role of support assistants and confirmed that learning support assistants in Abertillery Learning Community responsible for pupils with additional learning needs would not be affected. A review of learning support assistants had been undertaken which took into account the teacher to pupil ratio set out in the national model. The number of learning support assistants at risk of redundancy had been devised from this calculation and schools and HR had supported learning support assistants through redeployment and other opportunities available.

A Member commented that the onus was on the school Governing Body to deliver first class education to pupils and deliver its budget. Another Member praised the good work of the Governing Body and staff at Ebbw Fawr for the improvements carried out.

The Chair expressed concern that due to roadworks being carried out near Brynmawr Foundation school pupils were missing certain aspects of sports play. The Director said

	<p>that Brynmawr Foundation school had a large playing space and roadworks at and around the site needed to progress quickly so that sports could resume.</p> <p>Members concurred that it was a positive report with 11 schools categorised as Green and 10 schools categorised as Yellow.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the report be accepted as provided.</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>SCHOOL ATTENDANCE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise attendance data for Blaenau Gwent at Primary and Secondary school level for the academic year 2018-19.</p> <p>The Education Welfare Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member referred to the 1.6% persistent absenteeism, the Education Welfare Manager said that there were some inconsistencies with how individual schools dealt with persistent absenteeism, however, the Education Welfare Service worked closely with schools to promote regular school attendance and to embed new working practices which supported this aim. The Service was also looking at how other local authorities dealt with this issue. She added that the majority of absences were due to illness and not holidays.</p> <p>A Member commented that some parents were hard to reach and schools were working hard to promote good attendance and address persistent absenteeism.</p> <p>A Member enquired if school staff absenteeism was recorded. The Director of Education confirmed that school staff absences were reported to the relevant scrutiny committee i.e. school staff attendance data would be presented to the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee for consideration.</p>	

	<p>A Member referred to PISA data for 15 year olds. The Director of Education said that this was a sample across Wales. The headline was positive but not perfect and reflected the data accurately but the ambition remained to improve.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding truancy, the Education Welfare Manager said that absences were challenged and an officer would make a home visit if necessary. Schools shared good practice, one school had introduced battle boards and punctuality boards. Working as a multi agency to look at attendances provided a more effective service and strong links with Children's Services enabled referrals to be made. The Director commented that forensics of high level data enabled the team to work more effectively using code analysis.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2, namely that the report be accepted as provided.</p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 15TH JANUARY, 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 15th January, 2020 be approved.</p>	

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: COMMUNITY SERVICE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
5th DECEMBER, 2019**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. WILKINS (CHAIR)

Councillors C. Meredith
L. Elias
S. Healy
W. Hodgins
H. McCarthy
B. Summers

WITH: Managing Director
Corporate Director Community Services &
Regeneration
Head of Community Services
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
Service Manager Community Services
Service Manager Public Protection
Service Manager Accountancy
Team Leader - Waste & Fleet Management
Team Leader Housing Solutions & Compliance
Senior Housing Access Officer
Communications, Marketing & Customer Access
Manager
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

**AND: Silent Valley Waste Services Ltd.
Mr. Dave Waggett) Item No. 11 Silent Valley Waste
Mr. Noel Chard) Services Ltd. Performance**

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u>	

	It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received for Councillors G.L. Davies, J. Holt and G. Paulsen.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor J. Wilkins (Chair) declared an interest in the following item:</p> <p>Item No. 6 – Bridging the Gap – Trade Waste Service – Strategic Business Review</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on 11th November, 2019 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 11TH NOVEMBER, 2019</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on 11th November, 2019 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u><i>The Strategic Business Case – Development of a Second Household Waste Recycling Centre</i></u></p> <p>The Chair said it was intended that a report be submitted to the Special Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on the 19th December, 2019. In relation to the request for a Joint Committee, she said at this stage she had taken the decision to remain with a Special Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, and this decision was based on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a Joint Committee was held, only those Members of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee would have voting rights; 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ebbw Fach Valley was very well represented on the Scrutiny Committee; • She did not want to undermine the work of the Scrutiny Committee, and this matter sits clearly within the remit of the Committee; and finally • The Scrutiny Committee makes a recommendation not a decision. <p><u>Activities Report – Littering and Dog Control Order Enforcement for the Financial Year</u></p> <p>In response to a question raised by a Member regarding pest control, the Officer confirmed that the contractor had changed and the new details would be circulated to Members. The Council’s website had been updated.</p> <p><u>Item Referred from the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee</u></p> <p>The Chair confirmed that this matter would be included within the Committee’s Forward Work Programme.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
-----	<p><u>ORDER OF AGENDA</u></p> <p>It was agreed that Item No. 11 (Silent Valley Waste Services Ltd. Performance) be considered at this juncture.</p>	
No. 11	<p><u>SILENT VALLEY WASTE SERVICES LTD. PERFORMANCE</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14,</p>	

	<p>Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Head of Community Services.</p> <p>The Service Manager Community Services presented the report which provided the Committee the performance information of Silent Valley Waste Services Ltd covering the period 2018/2019 (Appendix 1). The report was presented as a result of a recommendation to Council in 2017 from the review of Silent Valley.</p> <p>In response to questions raised by a Member regarding the figures detailed in section 5.1 of the report, Mr. Waggett said a decision was taken in 2016 to support the Local Authority in the midst of financial austerity by not fully recharging the Local Authority. As a result of this the Company was operating at a loss which meant that the reserve position was also deteriorating due to the year on year loss. In terms of the figure held in Company House, he explained that this was different to the figure held in the escrow account, which was held jointly with NRW. The escrow account currently stood at £1.6m and was identified for aftercare of the site. This account was included within the overall figures, but did not form part of the reserves. He concluded that the £1.6m would take the company up to the end of the lease to 2044, however, provision beyond that for the remainder of the 60 year term would have to be provided for.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report which contained information relating to the business/financial affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>BRIDGING THE GAP – TRADE WASTE SERVICE – STRATEGIC BUSINESS REVIEW</u></p> <p>Councillor J. Wilkins (Chair) declared and interest in this item.</p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services.</p>	

The Team Leader Waste & Fleet Management presented the report which provided an update on progress of the Trade Waste Service Strategic Business Review, and also provided options in relation to the revised pricing strategy for implementation in April 2020.

In response to a question raised by a Member regarding funding of the proposed increase in receptacles to customers, the Officer confirmed that this had been factored into the budget, and some had already been procured.

A Member asked whether there was any benchmarking information available to compare costs with the private sector.

The Officer said it was difficult to compare with the private sector as their costs were commercially confidential. They were able to offer prices on an ad hoc basis, whilst our prices were set and published.

The Service Manager Community Services said one of the requirements of the new Environment Act coming into force next year was that the public sector and the private sector would have to separate the trade waste collected. This placed the Local Authority in a positive position as we were already doing this, whereas the private sector operated a co-mingled collection.

A Member then referred to Appendix 6 and expressed concern regarding the response to the on-line customer survey.

The Team Leader Waste & Fleet Management agreed that the response was disappointing, however, the survey had not been undertaken for a number of years. He said a new Officer had recently been appointed within the section, and part of that role was to go out and engage with businesses and our customers.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted the introduction of a revised pricing strategy for commercial dry recycling, food recycling and residual collections be supported (Option 2).

No. 7

BRIDGING THE GAP – ASSETS AND PROPERTY STRATEGIC BUSINESS REVIEW

Consideration was given to report of the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services.

The Corporate Director presented the report which sought Members' views on the proposals identified as part of the review of the Council's property and land holdings. The review included all Council owned properties and land, and all property used by the Council on a lease/rental basis. He confirmed that the industrial property portfolio would be covered in a separate review.

A Member referred to Table 2 on page 33 of the report and questioned the figure relating to Anvil Court. He also expressed concern regarding the amount of money being spent on the building.

The Corporate Director confirmed that the figure should be amended to read £218,947. In terms of the money being spent he explained that the Council leased the building, and also had an annual maintenance programme in place in order to mitigate any maintenance costs being incurred on completion of the lease.

A brief discussion ensued when the Corporate Director clarified points raised by Members in relation to Anvil Court and Church Street, Ebbw Vale. He confirmed that relevant discussions were taking place in terms of options and future delivery of Council services.

The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Proposals 1 – 7 be supported (Option 1), namely:

- Proposal 1 – To dispose of all non-operational buildings currently being held by the Council having regard to any grant clawback or legal obligations that may be in place which may affect its saleability. This could secure capital receipts as well as providing savings to the corporate land budget in holding costs as well as reducing/avoid rates on the premises (short term).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal 2 – To ensure the rates paid by the Council are minimised by reviewing the accuracy of current rates payments, and the rating of property in the Council’s portfolio and to introduce a systematic approach to regularly review the rates paid on Council premises. The Council are currently securing specialist advice in this area in order to manage its rates position more efficiently. • Proposal 3 – To review the Council’s occupation of properties held on a leasehold basis to establish whether there are any opportunities to reduce payments to landlords. The Council are currently securing specialist advice in this area (short to medium term). • Proposal 4 – To develop a proposal for 21st Century Civic Centre/office facility for Council staff in line with best practice space utilisation. This could be based around a single or two site solution and involve partners (medium term). • Proposal 5 – To increase the income derived for land and other assets. All of the Council’s land holdings need to be assessed to identify why land is being held, and the values to the Council in terms of income streams through a series of area reviews. This is an opportunity to not just potentially increase income but to divest the Council of land that may have long term maintenance liabilities (medium term). • Proposal 6 – To utilise capital receipts received from the disposals to crease an investment fund for use in bringing residential sites forward and other income generating opportunities. • Proposal 7 – To secure the energy savings delivered by the ReFit investment in the Council’s estate. 	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>COMMUNITY SERVICES QUARTERS 1 AND 2 PERFORMANCE 2019/20</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Head of Community Services.</p>	

	<p>The Corporate Director Community Services & Regeneration presented the report which provided an update of Community Services performance outcomes for Quarters 1 and 2 of 2019/20. This was the first time the report had been submitted in the new format, and he commended the Performance Team for their support. He then went through the report and highlighted points contained therein.</p> <p>A brief discussion ensued when Officers clarified points raised by Members in relation to fly tipping and highways resurfacing works.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>REVIEW OF BLAENAU GWENT HOMES ALLOCATION POLICY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Housing Solutions and Compliance.</p> <p>The Team Manager presented the report which proposed policy and operational changes to the Blaenau Gwent Homes Allocation Scheme as a consequence of a recent review of the Scheme and consultation process. The Team Manager, and the Senior Housing Access Manager went through the report and highlighted points contained.</p> <p>In response to a question raised by a Member regarding the proposed changes to the quotas, the Team Manager said this had been done so that an applicants' priority for housing better reflected the type of accommodation available, their level of housing need and length of time spent on the waiting list.</p> <p>A brief discussion ensued regarding the banding scheme, and a Member asked how many properties an applicant was able to refuse.</p> <p>In response the Team Leader said if an applicant refused three offers, they would be brought before the Local Housing Panel where a decision could be taken to exclude them from</p>	

	<p>the waiting list, however, an applicant had the right to appeal any decision made.</p> <p>Another Member referred to the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements, and asked whether the Team had any control over private landlords renting to high risk applicants.</p> <p>The Officer said they had no control over private landlords, but pointed out that high risk applicants usually come through a certain pathway and various agencies would have a risk management plan in place to identify suitable accommodation for them, and they would also be monitored by the Police.</p> <p>A brief discussion ensued when Officers clarified points raised by Members.</p> <p>The Service Manager Public Protection thanked the Housing Solutions Team for their work in undertaking a review of the Policy.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and Members considered the proposed policy changes to the Blaenau Gwent Homes Allocation Scheme for implementation in April 2020 and recommend approval by the Executive Committee (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 16TH JANUARY, 2020</u></p> <p>Councillor L. Elias left the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>Consideration was given to the Forward Work Programme for the meeting scheduled for the 16th January, 2020.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted.</p>	
<p>No. 12</p>	<p><u>WASTE TRANSFER STATION AND HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public</p>	

interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.

RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Part 4, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

Consideration was given to report of the Managing Director which presented the findings of the due diligence activity commissioned in relation to the Waste Transfer Station and Household Waste Recycling Centre.

The Managing Director spoke to the report and highlighted points contained therein. The report sought approval to move to the next stage in the process as outlined in the preferred option at section 3.6 of the report.

A discussion ensued when the Managing Director clarified points raised by a Member regarding the financial implications outlined at section 2.15 of the report.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report which contained information relating to the business/financial affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted, and Option 1 be supported, namely:

- i. Take forward Option One and carry out soft market testing to better understand the opportunity to achieve a public sector collaboration;
- ii. Should there not be sufficient interest from the public sector to take forward the preferred option, Scrutiny be requested to endorse a proposal for Officers to develop a contingency plan for the delivery of services;
- iii. To mitigate against the risks associated with depleting the general reserves that should be retained to cover the costs associated with the aftercare liabilities of the site, it is proposed that the Council explores options for securing sufficient reserves to meet the assessed costs and liabilities up to 2076.

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
9TH DECEMBER, 2019**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR L. PARSONS (CHAIR)

Councillors J. Hill
G.A. Davies
G.L. Davies
M. Holland
J. Millard
J.C. Morgan
B. Willis

AND: Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
Head of Regeneration
Service Manager Development & Estates
Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities
Team Manager Connected Communities
Residential Development Officer
Business Regeneration Manager
Scrutiny Officer

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received for Councillors M. Day, P. Edwards, M. Moore, K. Pritchard, M. Cross, H. McCarthy.</p>	

<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor J.C. Morgan declared an interest in the following:</p> <p>Item No. 8 - Regeneration and Economic Development Six Month Performance</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 14th November, 2019 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 14TH NOVEMBER, 2019</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 14th November, 2019 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u><i>Action Sheet 23rd September, 2019 (Request for a Joint Committee – Leisure Services)</i></u></p> <p>A Member requested an update on the situation regarding the request for a Joint Committee. He said Leisure Services had been considered by a Joint Committee initially, and he felt this arrangement should continue, particularly in light of a number of Members on the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee sitting on the Leisure Review Members’ Working Group.</p> <p>In response the Scrutiny Officer said Leisure Services sits within the remit of the Community Services Committee, and any request for a Joint Committee would need to be referred to the Chair of that Committee for consideration.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>ENERGY PROSPECTUS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities.</p>	

The Team Manager presented the report which sought Members' support to recommend the draft Energy Prospectus to the Executive for approval, to be released and marketed to potential project partners and investors. It was hoped that the Prospectus would demonstrate the proactive approach being taken by the Council to increase local energy generation and offer a significant contribution towards the reduction of our carbon footprint.

The Officer went through the report in detail and highlighted points contained therein.

A Member enquired regarding the air quality in Blaenau Gwent, and also what benefits could be expected after implementation of all the proposed initiatives. He was sceptical regarding the use of electric vehicles, as while there had been some advances, the infrastructure was still not in place for electric vehicles.

The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services said the air quality in the Borough was monitored and reported through the Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis. There were currently no issues with our air quality, and hopefully some of the initiatives outlined in the Energy Prospectus would ensure that position. In terms of implementation of projects, there was significant funding available to invest in energy projects, and the Council had committed to reducing our carbon footprint.

The Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities said reduction of the carbon footprint was on the National agenda, and there may well be targets imposed in the future, and financial penalties for not hitting those targets. In relation to the Member's comments regarding electric vehicles, the Officer said this was also part of the National agenda, and was something that the Council could not afford not to take into account, however, there was national funding available to support this initiative.

A Member said he fully supported and welcomed the report. As part of the Bridging the Gap proposals the Authority had committed to reducing its carbon footprint to zero by 2030, and he said this Prospectus was evidence that we are moving towards that target.

	<p>Another Member said he also welcomed the report, but felt that it could be extended to include the wider community.</p> <p>In response the Officer said the Prospectus was very much a starting point, and it seemed appropriate to look at businesses in the first instance as they are the largest energy users in the Borough. However, another strand of the programme identified the need to understand how our residents use energy and what can be done to help them reduce their carbon footprint.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the Scrutiny Committee support the Blaenau Gwent Energy Prospectus and recommend approval by the Executive Committee (Option 2).</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY REVIEW</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services.</p> <p>The Residential Development Officer presented the report which informed Members of the requirement to update and revise the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) in line with Welsh Government guidance, and sought the views of the Committee prior to Executive approval to engage in developing a new Local Housing Strategy.</p> <p>A discussion ensued when the Team Manager Connected Communities said the aim of the LHS was to achieve a balanced community with a greater mix of affordable housing and open market homes. Whilst we want to attract people to the area, we also want to create good quality homes for our residents. In terms of homelessness, the Officer said Blaenau Gwent did not have significant issues to the levels seen within Newport and Cardiff, however, there were people in Blaenau Gwent with no permanent housing arrangements and having to ‘sofa surf’ with family and friends.</p> <p>A Member said this Strategy was very important for the Borough, and he was pleased to see a focus on the provision of good quality housing.</p>	

	<p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the Scrutiny Committee endorse the Council to work collaboratively with Gwent wide Local Authorities to investigate the possibility of producing a Regional Housing Strategy and local action plan (Option 2).</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SIX MONTH PERFORMANCE</u></p> <p>Councillor J.C. Morgan declared an interest in this item.</p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Head of Regeneration.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services presented the report which provided service activity from April 2019 to September 2019, and highlighted how the Department contributed towards four of the Council's corporate aims in terms of delivering a resilient Wales, healthier Wales, a more equal Wales, and a Wales of more cohesive communities. He said this was the first time the report had been presented in the new format.</p> <p>A discussion ensued when a Member said the report should include the aims of the Future Generations Act, and aspects of Tech Valleys and Cardiff City Deal.</p> <p>A Member welcomed the new format. He referred to the Aspire apprenticeship scheme and asked whether new housing developers in the Borough were being contacted regarding apprenticeship opportunities.</p> <p>In response the Team Manager Connected Communities confirmed that opportunities for apprenticeships were explored wherever possible with local contractors. In terms of the larger housing developments now coming through, some of the larger contractors offered apprenticeships as part of community benefits.</p> <p>A further discussion ensued regarding the options for recommendation, when a Member proposed an additional recommendation (Option 3), namely that the report be accepted, subject to the inclusion of the aims of the Future</p>	

	<p>Generations Act, and aspects of Tech Valleys and Cardiff City Deal.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Officer explained that the Member's comments would be raised as an action point and passed to the Performance Team for inclusion in future reports, Members agreed this course of action; and it was</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted as provided (Option 2).</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY TASK AND FINISH GROUP</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Corporate Director Regeneration & Economic Development.</p> <p>The Team Manager Connected Communities presented the report which outlined the recommendation to establish a Town Centre Task and Finish Group.</p> <p>The Chair sought nominations from the Committee when a Member said there should be representation for each Town Centre.</p> <p>Following a brief discussion, the Chair confirmed that he would discuss representation with Members, and it was</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the establishment of a Town Centre Strategy Task and Finish Group be approved (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 23RD JANUARY, 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Forward Work Programme for the meeting scheduled to be held on 23rd January, 2020.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted.</p>	

Agenda Item 19

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 21.1.20

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 20.1.20

Committee: Council

Date of Meeting:

6th February, 2020

Report Subject:

**Revenue Budget 2020/2021 to
2024/2025**

Portfolio Holder:

**Leader/Executive Member –
Corporate Services, Councillor N.
Daniels**

Report Submitted by:

R. Hayden – Chief Officer Resources

Report Written by:

**D. McAuliffe – Senior Business
Partner, Financial Management
Accounting Team**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	14/01/20				28/01/20	29/01/20	06/02/20	

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report is presented to Members to:-

- i) provide an update on the positive provisional local government settlement for 2020/21 and its impact upon the Council's budget
- ii) consider and agree the detailed budget for 2020/21 and indicative budget for 2021/22
- iii) agree the level of Council Tax increase for the 2020/2021 financial year.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 Members will be aware that a revised Medium Term Financial Strategy was agreed by Council in December 2019. This report updates Members with the latest financial position regarding the budget setting process following the announcement of the provisional local government settlement for 2020/21. The report covers the following:

Section	Contents
2.8 – 2.19	National Aggregate External Finance (AEF) Position
2.20 – 2.26	Blaenau Gwent AEF position
5.1.4 - 5.1.5	Aggregated External Finance (AEF) funding compared to MTFS
5.1.6 – 5.1.8	Cost Pressures and Growth
5.1.9 - 5.1.10	Revised funding gap
5.1.11–5.1.18	Treatment of Grants & new responsibilities transferring into the settlement
5.1.19–5.1.24	Bridging The Gap Programme
5.1.25 -5.1.28	Further Budget Considerations
6.1.1	Revenue Budget 2019/20 – half year position
6.1.2	General Revenue Reserves 2019/20 – half year position

- 2.2 The Provisional Settlement contains details of the revenue funding that Welsh Authorities can expect to receive in 2020/21 in order to allow them to set their budgets and determine levels of Council Tax for that year. It also provides details of the Capital funding that Authorities can expect to receive to fund their Capital Programmes. Indicative figures for the 2021/22 financial year and beyond have not been provided at this stage. The letter from the Minister is attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.3 Revenue funding from Welsh Government (WG) is provided in the form of Aggregate External Finance (AEF) which is made up of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR). This AEF funding is un-hypothecated i.e. it is not earmarked for specific services and it is up to individual Councils to decide how to allocate to services in order to fit with their priorities (while taking into account statutory responsibilities).
- 2.4 Revenue funding also comes in the form of specific grants, in which case the funding is earmarked for a particular purpose. It is the long term intention of the WG that the number of specific grants is reduced, with funding being transferred into the AEF, giving Local Authorities more flexibility on distributing funding to services. Hence, this form of funding should diminish over time.
- 2.5 Capital funding is provided in the form of General Capital funding, made up of an Un-hypothecated Supported Borrowing (USB) approval and General Capital Grant approval. The USB approval is a borrowing approval for which revenue support is provided within the AEF to cover debt financing costs i.e. principal and interest. It is un-hypothecated, meaning that borrowing can be carried out for any capital purpose. The General Capital Grant, is as its name suggests, a grant that can be used for any capital purpose.
- 2.6 The funding information contained within the provisional settlement has enabled this report to be produced, bringing together sections covering the revenue budget setting process.
- 2.7 The positive provisional settlement combined with the opportunities identified in the Bridging the Gap programme means that the Council is able to invest in key priorities, avoid cuts to services and enhance its financial resilience.
- 2.8 **National Position (All Wales)**
- 2.9 The overall headline increase in AEF quoted by WG is 3.9%, after taking into account transfers into the settlement. Compared to the Welsh average increase of 4.3%, this places Blaenau Gwent in the bottom third of the all-Wales table (see Appendix 2).
- 2.10 There have been four transfers into the settlement, as follows:-
- £39.112m for the teachers' pensions grant
 - £12.018m for the teachers' pay grant
 - £1.9m for NHS funded nursing care

- £151k for the Coastal Risk Management Programme

- 2.11 It will be a matter for each council to decide whether to passport all or some of this funding to the relevant budget holders.
- 2.12 Certain Specific Revenue Grants data has only been published on an all-Wales basis, totalling £982m. Funding for some grants has increased eg Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant, PDG Access and Social Care Workforce and Sustainability Pressures Grant. In addition, there is a new grant for Additional Learning Needs. Some grants have decreased eg the Sustainable Waste Management Grant.
- 2.13 In terms of capital grants, there are some significant increases in the Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme, 21st Century Schools, Welsh Medium Education, Active Travel Fund and the Childcare Offer.
- 2.14 Further details of the specific grants for local government will be published alongside the final RSG settlement in February 2020.
- 2.15 As RSG increases range from 3% to 5.4%, the Minister has concluded that there is no need for a funding floor mechanism in this instance.
- 2.16 Although not specifically referenced in the Minister's letter, the current policy and funding arrangements for Council Tax Reduction Schemes (CTRS) continues into 2020/2021. Consequently, £244 million continues to be included in the Settlement for funding the Council Tax Support Scheme. This reflects the costs of the Scheme when it was first established in 2013/2014, but again means that any additional costs resulting from increases in council tax levels or caseload for 2020/2021 will fall to Local Authorities.
- 2.17 The non-hypothecated general capital funding for 2020-21 will be £198 million (including £20 million for public highways refurbishment grant) - an increase of £15 million over that announced in the Final Budget last year.
- 2.18 The Minister states this is a good settlement and one which should alleviate some of the anticipated pressures. The Minister also notes that the latest tax base figures have been used (and so there should be no amendment to the final settlement as a result of this), but cannot guarantee that there will be no further changes, resulting from a new UK Government.
- 2.19 The provisional settlement announcement marks the start of a seven week consultation period which ends on 3rd February 2020. After this the Minister will consider whether further amendments are to be made, before the final settlement is announced on 25th February 2020.

2.20 **Blaenau Gwent Position**

2.21 The headline increase for BGCBC after allowing for transfers is 3.9% (£4.3m), compared to the all Wales increase of 4.3%. Changes across Wales range from 5.4% for Newport to 3% for Monmouthshire.

This positive settlement combined with the opportunities identified in the Bridging the Gap programme means that subject to the recommendations in the report being agreed, the Council is able to agree a two year budget providing a level of certainty to Residents, Members and staff.

2.22 The Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) increase, quoted as 5.6%, is the lowest in Wales (compared to an all Wales increase of 6.4%).

2.23 The SSA is the detailed funding formula that is intended to reflect variations in the need to spend which might be expected if all Welsh Authorities responded in a similar way to the demand for services in their area. Indicators of need include population, pupil numbers, deprivation factors, population dispersion etc. The SSA is the mechanism for distributing RSG which enables Authorities to ***theoretically*** charge the same council tax for the provision of a similar standard of service. However, if Authorities don't spend at SSA level, then council tax levels will not be the same, which in practice, is what happens.

2.24 Changes in SSA data and formulae with a significant impact in Blaenau Gwent are explained below:

Population – Blaenau Gwent's population has increased by 0.2% compared to the Welsh average increase of 0.1%.

Population indicators make up a large proportion of the cost driver indicators within the SSA formula.

Education – Primary pupil numbers have increased by 1.3% compared to the Welsh average reduction of 0.2%. Secondary school pupil numbers have fallen by 1%, compared to the Welsh average increase of 2%. Free School meals data has been frozen at the 2018 level.

All these factors have resulted in an overall increase to Blaenau Gwent's Education SSA. For information, BGCBC has consistently spent above the Education SSA on the Education services it provides.

Deprivation Indicators - IS (Income Support)/ JSA (Job seekers Allowance) /PC (Pension Credit)/ UC (Universal Credit)/ not in employment claimants have fallen by 6% compared to the Welsh average decrease of 3%. This has had an impact on the SSA increase.

- 2.25 The Authority remains the highest receiver of Aggregate External Finance (RSG plus NNDR) on a per capita basis.
- 2.26 General Capital Funding has increased by £29,000 from 2019/2020 to £3.87 million.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 **Option 1 (preferred option)**
- 3.1.1 Subject to the decisions on the following recommendations, Members agree the 2020/2021 revenue budget and high level indicative budget for 2021/2022 (as per Appendix 5 and para 6.4.1).
- 3.1.2 Members to provide comment on the outcomes within the overall provisional RSG Settlement and note the potential for further change in the Final RSG Settlement (paras 2.8 – 2.19).
- 3.1.3 Members to provide comment on the outcomes within the BGCBC provisional RSG Settlement and its impact upon the Medium Term Financial Strategy (paras 2.20 – 2.26)
- 3.1.4 Members to consider and agree the updated cost pressures and growth items (£2m in total) identified in Appendix 3 (paras 5.1.6 – 5.1.8) for inclusion in the Council’s budget.
This includes the establishment of a cross cutting Transformation budget of £500,000 to be utilised to implement / deliver opportunities for Blaenau Gwent.
- 3.1.5 Members to consider the grants transferring into the settlement and approve “passporting” expenditure from these former specific grants / additional funding into the Council’s budget (paras 5.1.11 – 5.1.18).
- 3.1.6 Members consider and approve that any achievement of Bridging the Gap proposals which exceeds the in year budget requirement be transferred into an earmarked reserve to support medium term financial planning, specifically for the later years of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (para 5.1.28).
- 3.1.7 Members agree a Council tax increase of 4% for 2020/21 (para 5.1.3) as per the MTFS assumptions.
- 3.2 **Option 2**
- 3.2.1 Members consider and do not agree the recommendations in the report.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 The budget setting process will enable a greater alignment between the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the Corporate Plan. This will be evidenced in the budget reports to Joint Scrutiny, Executive and Council.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)

5.1.1 The most recent iteration of the MTFS (agreed by Council on December 12th 2019) indicates (prior to the identification of budget reductions) funding gap figures of:-

5.1.2 **Table 1 – MTFS Funding Gap (as at 12th December 2019)**

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
£3.2m	£2.5m	£4.7m	£2.9m	£2.9m	£16.2m

5.1.3 These are based upon a number of assumptions including:

- cash flat level of funding from WG for 2020/2021 onwards
- a Council Tax increase of 4% per annum

5.1.4 AEF Funding Compared to MTFS

5.1.5 Clearly, the provisional settlement increase in funding of £4.3m (3.9%) for 2020/2021 for Blaenau Gwent is better than the MTFS modelled position of 0%. As a result of a better than anticipated settlement, the original funding gap can now be revised. Table 2 takes account of the provisional settlement and revised cost pressures.

5.1.6 Service Cost Pressures and Growth

5.1.7 Existing and new service cost pressures items totalling £1.095m for 2020/2021, £0.53m for 2021/2022, have been included in the MTFS and the funding gap identified above. £1m per annum has been assumed for 2022/2023 onwards.

5.1.8 Following the provisional settlement these have been reviewed and updated and now total £2m for the 2020/2021 financial year. These revised cost pressures and growth items are included at Appendix 3, the changes to those agreed by Council in December 2019 include::

- Teachers Pay and Pensions – The settlement only provided funding to cover the increase in costs for a 7 month period. The resulting cost

pressure for the remaining 5 months of the financial year is assessed as £0.76m.

- Sustainable Waste Management Grant (£1.8m All Wales reduction in grant) – resulting in a cost pressure of £35,000, on top of the current years cost pressure of £50,000 (£85,000 total).
- Sustainable Social Services grant – the settlement identifies a significant increase in this specific grant for 2020/21. This should allow the service to manage costs / budgets without the requirement for an increase in its core funding. The previously agreed cost pressure of £392,000 can therefore be reduced / removed.
- Transformation Budget - It would be prudent to establish a Transformation Budget which could be utilised for example to implement / deliver transformational projects and investments across the Council – this will reduce the requirement to utilize earmarked reserves. It is proposed that this budget be set at £500,000.

5.1.9 It is proposed that the revised cost pressures and growth items are agreed and built into the Council's budget from 2020/21.

5.1.10 **Table 2 - Funding Gap based on 2020/2021 Provisional RSG***

	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Funding					
AEF	(116,063)	(116,063)	(116,063)	(116,063)	(116,063)
Council Tax @ 4%	(34,591)	(35,974)	(37,413)	(38,910)	(40,466)
Total Funding	(150,654)	(152,037)	(153,476)	(154,973)	(156,529)
Draft Estimates - Prior to savings	147,307	152,528	158,021	162,215	166,468
Funding Gap /(surplus)	(3,347)	491	4,545	7,242	9,939
Cost Pressures/growth	2,046	529	1,000	1,000	1,000
Contribution to Reserves	200	200	200	200	200
	(1,101)	1,220	5,745	8,442	11,139

Funding Gap /(surplus)					
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*the above funding gap is prior to Bridging the Gap opportunities being applied

5.1.11 **Treatment of Grants and new responsibilities transferring into the Settlement**

5.1.12 The draft estimate figures currently do not include these amounts as transferring into the budget as they were only announced as part of the 2020/2021 settlement. As the grants are transferring into the settlement, they will no longer be received as a specific grant, but instead are built into the AEF funding.

5.1.13 The provisional settlement includes the transfer of two specific grants and additional funding totalling £1.122m into the RSG. The impact upon Blaenau Gwent is :-

- £253,000 - funding to assist with the cost pressure relating to the pay award for teachers. This funding covers the costs for 7 months.
- £822,000 - funding to assist with the costs of the employers contribution to the teacher's pension scheme. This funding covers the costs for 7 months.
- £47,000 – funding in relation to NHS Funded Nursing care.

5.1.14 All Councils will need to consider whether they want to continue to support the activity formerly funded by specific grant and additional funding or use the resources for other purposes. If the Council does not agree to passport funding in this way, there will be a new cost pressure within these budgets.

5.1.15 It is proposed that the grants transferring into the settlement are passported to relevant budgets from 2020/21.

Impact Upon the Individual Schools Budget (ISB)

5.1.16 Passporting the grants transferring into RSG (£1.075m for teachers pay and Pensions) and agreeing to fund the schools cost pressures (£1.16m) identified in Appendix 3 (£0.76m for 5months teachers' pay & pensions and £0.395m for an increase in pupil demographics) will result in an increase to the ISB of approximately 5%, slightly above the increase Council will receive of 4.9%.

5.1.17 The table below shows the revised overall position, assuming Council agrees to passport grants transferring into the settlement directly to relevant budgets, as:

5.1.18 **Table 3 – Revised Funding Gap (assuming Grants passported)**

	2020/2021 £'000	2021/2022 £'000	2022/2023 £'000	2023/2024 £'000	2024/2025 £'000
Provisional Funding Gap (Surplus)/Deficit	(1,101)	1,220	5,745	8,442	11,139
Grants transferring into settlement:-					
Teachers pay award	253	253	253	253	253
Employers Pension Contributions - Teachers	822	822	822	822	822
NHS Funded Nursing Care	47	47	47	47	47
Total Grants transferring In	1,122	1,122	1,122	1,122	1,122
Revised Funding Gap	21	2,342	6,867	9,564	12,261

5.1.19 **BRIDGING THE GAP – Position Statement**

5.1.20 The table below provides a summary of the current estimated achievement of the Strategic Business Reviews:

5.1.21 **Table 4 – Estimated Achievement of Bridging the Gap Strategic Business Reviews**

Estimated Achievement Range:	2020/2021 £'000	2021/2022 £'000	2022/2023 £'000	2023/2024 £'000	2024/2025 £'000
Low	1,465	914	1,346	800	800
High	2,141	1,374	1,856	1,300	1,300

- 5.1.22 Details of the workstreams within Bridging the Gap have been scrutinised by relevant scrutiny committees during November / December 2019 and were agreed by Council as part of the MTFS (Appendix 4).
- 5.1.23 It is proposed to factor in the estimated lower level achievement of the proposals into the budget which will result in the funding gap/(surplus) as follows:-

5.1.24 **Table 5 – Funding Gap / (Surplus) After Applying the Bridging The Gap Estimated Achievement**

	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Revised Funding Gap	21	2,342	6,867	9,564	12,261
BTG low current year	(1,465)	(914)	(1,346)	(800)	(800)
BTG prev. year		(1,465)	(2,379)	(3,725)	(4,525)
Final funding Gap/(surplus)	(1,444)	(37)	3,142	5,039	6,936

- 5.1.25 Further budget considerations:-
- 5.1.26 The better than anticipated settlement will enable the consideration of a number of other factors, in balancing the budget for 2020/2021 and beyond.

5.1.27 ***Transfer to Earmarked Reserves***

It is proposed that the achievement of Bridging the Gap which exceeds the budget requirement be transferred into an earmarked reserve to support medium term financial planning, specifically for the later years of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

- 5.2.1 *MTFS Outcomes are not delivered as expected* – this risk will be mitigated by regular monitoring of proposals, which will also be reported through the quarterly budget monitoring reports to the Joint Budget Scrutiny Committee and Executive.
- 5.2.2 *Council may fail to set a balanced budget within the legal timeframe.* This will be mitigated by ensuring that Members consider the budget in February 2020.

5.2.3 *If grants and new responsibilities are not passported through to services, this will result in budget pressures in the next financial year. This can be mitigated by Members agreeing to passport the financial resources identified.*

5.2.4 *If Welsh Government does not provide indicative figures for Revenue Support Grant into the medium term, there is a risk that budget planning will be adversely affected. This risk can be mitigated somewhat by robust medium term financial planning.*

5.2.5 *There is a risk that Brexit will have an adverse financial impact on the procurement of goods and services. This risk can be mitigated through the governance processes that the Council has introduced to monitor the impact of Brexit.*

5.3 **Legal**

5.3.1 The Council has a legal duty to set a balanced budget.

5.4 **Human Resources**

5.4.1 The positive provisional settlement combined with the opportunities identified in the Bridging the Gap programme means that the Council is able to invest in key priorities and avoid cuts to services.

5.4.2 Consequently, only 2 post reductions have been identified within the 2020/21 budget and it is anticipated these will be achieved through voluntary redundancies. There will be service change implications arising from the continued commercial activity and transformation of services, which may impact upon staff in the future, however no compulsory redundancies are envisaged at this stage.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 *Performance Information and Data*

6.1.1 **Revenue Budget 2019/20 – Half Year Position**

At the end of September 2019, i.e. the half year position for the current financial year, Portfolios and Committees forecast a relatively small end of year over spend of £7,000.

6.1.2 **General Revenue Reserves 2019/20 – Half Year Position**

As at the end of September 2019 it is forecast that the General Reserve will increase from the 31st March 2019 level of £5.89million, to £6.14 million. This addresses the improvement needed in reserves which was highlighted by the

Wales Audit Office in the Annual Audit Letter and supports the strengthening of the Council's financial resilience.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

6.2.1 The proposed budget will enable the Council to protect front line services and jobs, to invest in its priority areas and to continue its work to become a more commercial and resilient organisation.

6.3 **Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)**

6.3.1 The Council's approach to financial planning and the better than expected Welsh Government budget settlement means that there will be no impact on frontline services in the financial year 2020-21. As a result, the consultation on the budget focuses on people's views on the proposed Council Tax increase for 2020/21.

6.4 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**

6.4.1 The Council is moving to medium to long term financial planning. This is evidenced by the following:-

- Budget proposals will be considered on a five year rolling programme basis.
- The MTFS as agreed by Council in December 2019 covers the period 2020/2021 to 2024/2025 and will roll forward one year, every year. Assuming that all recommendations included within the report are agreed, a high level revised MTFS has been produced at Appendix 5, demonstrating a balanced budget for 2020/2021 and a balanced high level indicative budget for 2021/2022.
- Proposals within the Bridging the Gap programme are taking a long term view of opportunities for development.
- The current capital programme covers the period 2019/2020 to 2025/2026 and will roll forward by one year (as a minimum) every year.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

6.5.1 An increasing proportion of the Council's budget is invested into early intervention and prevention activities to prevent the escalation into more complex, high cost services.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

6.6.1 The report and accompany information has been developed in partnership with budget holders across all service areas.

6.7 **Integration(across service areas)**

N/A

6.8 **EqlA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)**

6.8.1 Screening has been undertaken on the Bridging the Gap proposals.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 *State how the work will be monitored e.g. through scrutiny or directorate performance management arrangements*

7.1.1 Wider Corporate leadership Team, political groups, Joint Budget Scrutiny, Executive and Council.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

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Our ref: MA/JJ/5755/19

To:
Leaders of County and County Borough Councils in Wales

Copied to:
Chief Executives and Directors of Finance, County and County Borough Councils in Wales
Chief Executive and Director of Finance, Welsh Local Government Association

16 December 2019

Dear Colleagues

Today I am announcing details of the Provisional Local Government Revenue and Capital Settlements for 2020-21 for county and county borough councils in Wales through a Cabinet Written Statement. This is attached for your information.

This announcement outlines my intention to set local government core revenue funding for 2020-21 at £4.474 billion. I am pleased this means, **after adjusting for transfers, overall core funding for local government in 2020-21 will increase by 4.3 per cent on a like-for-like basis compared to the current year.** While this does not mean austerity is over and there are, I know significant pressures, I hope that this significant increase can help you support and continue local critical and valued services.

Funding for schools has been a particular consideration of our budget discussions this year. Within this settlement, **we have provided funding for additional costs arising from the UK Government's announced changes to employer pension contributions. We have also provided funding for additional costs arising from the 2019/20 teachers' pay deal for the remainder of the academic year and have provided funding beyond this to recognise the future impacts of teachers' pay awards which will come into effect from September 2020.** We are also continuing to provide funding for our proposals for new eligibility criteria for free school meals, given the continued rollout of Universal Credit by the UK Government.

I have given careful consideration to the potential of including a funding floor for this settlement. Given that every authority will see an increase of at least 3% over 2019-20 on a like-for-like basis, I have concluded that a funding floor is not necessary in this particular instance. This will also enable us to reset the settlement base and fund authorities according to relative need, and not to make up for the implementation of historic floors.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Gohebiaeth.Julie.James@lyw.cymru
Correspondence.Julie.James@gov.Wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The non-hypothecated general capital funding for 2020-21 will be £198 million (including £20 million for public highways refurbishment grant) - an increase of £15 million over that announced in the Final Budget last year. I hope that this additional funding will enable you to respond to the urgent need to decarbonise, in light of the climate emergency declared by the Welsh Government and many councils over the past year.

We have discussed, before, our shared recognition of the need to invest in the supply of housing. Investing in social housing should minimise the pressures on local authority budgets and on homelessness services. Investment in housing can also support the Welsh economy and local economies. I hope that this settlement, capital and revenue, can support you in increasing the scale and pace of housebuilding across Wales.

The draft *Local Government Finance Report* and additional tables containing details of the provisional settlement by individual authority are also being published on the Welsh Government website. These tables include the individual authority allocations of Aggregate External Finance (AEF), comprising Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and redistributed Non-Domestic Rates (NDR). As we have discussed through FSG, we are also providing information on revenue and capital grants which are planned for 2020-21. This information will be further updated for the final settlement.

The delay in the publication of the provisional settlement has enabled us to draw on the latest tax-base figures for 2020-21, meaning that there should be no change between provisional and final settlements as a result of updates to the tax base.

This settlement provides you with the most stable platform I can offer for planning your budgets for the forthcoming financial year. I fully appreciate the pressures local government is facing and am committed to shielding local government from the worst effects of austerity. This is a good settlement that should alleviate some of the pressures that you had been anticipating and offers an opportunity for local government to plan for the future. While I can't guarantee that there will be no changes between the provisional and final settlements, due to the financial uncertainty that comes with a new UK Government, I can assure you that I do not intend on making any significant changes to the methodology or the data underpinning the distribution of this settlement.

My announcement today launches a 7-week period of formal consultation on the provisional local government settlement for 2020-21. I would be grateful if you could ensure your response arrives no later than **Monday, 3 February 2020**. All responses to this consultation should be sent to:

Simon Edwards
Local Government Finance and Workforce Partnerships Division
Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ.
Or email: LGFPSettlement@gov.wales.

Comments are invited about the effects (whether positive or adverse) the proposed settlement would have on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language. In addition, we invite comments on whether the proposed settlement could be formulated or revised to have positive effects, or decreased adverse effects, on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of each respondent are published along with the response. If you do not wish to be identified as the author of your response, please ensure you state this explicitly in your response.

Copies of responses may be placed in the Welsh Government's library. If you wish your comments to remain confidential, please make this clear in your reply. This will be considered in light of our obligations under the Freedom of Information Act. The Welsh Government will consider all responses received by the due date before the final determination is made and published.

Local authorities are reminded of the requirement to comply with the general equality duties set out in the Equality Act 2010, and also the specific equality duties where applicable. The equality impacts of budgetary options should be assessed and inform any final decisions.

Authorities also need to take account of your duties under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh language standards in preparing plans for 2020-21.

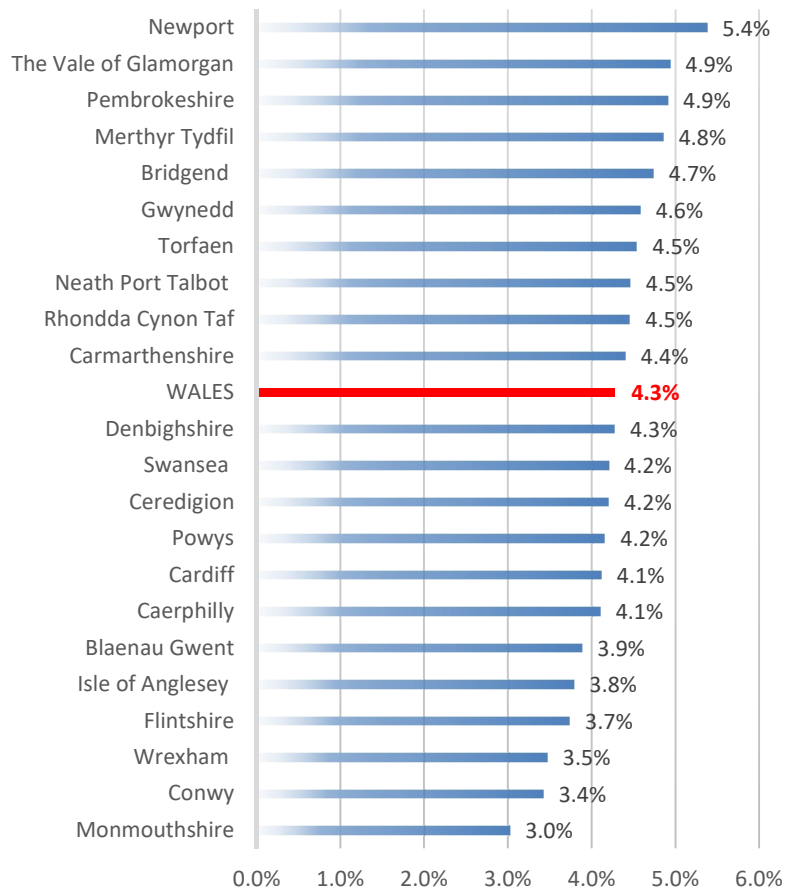
This provisional settlement provides you with the information you need to plan your budgets for 2020-21 and to consider how best you engage with your local communities in formulating your proposals and making budget decisions.

Yours sincerely

Julie James AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Tai a Llywodraeth Leol
Minister for Housing and Local Government

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Changes to AEF, 2018-19 to 2019-20 by local authority



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MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2020/21 TO 2024/25 - COST PRESSURES

PORTFOLIO	SERVICE	2020/2021 £	2021/2022 £	2022/2023 £	2023/2024 £	2024/2025 £
COST PRESSURES						
Corporate Services						
	Housing Benefit	107,000				
		107,000	0	0	0	0
Social Services						
	Community Care	-	162,000			
		-	162,000	-	-	-
Education						
	Teachers Pay & Pensions	766,000				
		766,000	-	-	-	-
Environment						
	Cemeteries	50,000				
	Sustainable Waste Management Grant Reduction	85,000				
		135,000	-	-	-	-
Planning						
	Review of LDP		133,000			
	Development of SDP	27,000	-	-	-	-
		27,000	133,000	-	-	-
All Portfolios						
	Cardiff City Deal	16,800	34,500			
	Loan Interest Costs Highways Prudential Borrowing funding	108,000	200,000			
		124,800	234,500	-	-	-
TOTAL EXISTING COST PRESSURES		1,159,800	529,500	-	-	-

GROWTH

Education	Pupil Population	229,500		182,000		152,200
	Pupil Population at Pen y Cwm	165,000				
		394,500	-	182,000	-	152,200
All Portfolios	Transformation Budget	492,000	-	-	-	-
TOTAL GROWTH		886,500	-	182,000	-	152,200
OVERALL TOTALS		2,046,300	529,500	182,000	-	152,200

Bridging the Gap - Proposed Savings 2020/2021

Saving Proposal	Low Estimated Achievement	Potential Impact on Post Numbers
Overall Savings target	£ 1,465,000	
1 Third Party Expenditure	550,000	
a Contract Management - Removing of Inflation applied to the Draft Estimates	500,000	
b Early Settlement Terms / Increased use of the Procurement Card	50,000	
2 Fees & Charges	200,000	
a Stretched Income Targets	105,185	
b Increase in Fees & Charges of 5.5% from April 2020	94,815	
3 Property & Asset Review	130,000	
Corporate Landlord - Reduction in the Rates & Maintenance Budgets following the CAT transfer / Selling/demolition:		
a Worcester St - £13,630 Brynmawr District Office - £24,730 Greenacre - £1,600	73,000	
b Corporate Landlord - Reduction in the Rates & Maintenance Budgets re: Buildings to be sold: Bryngwyn Primary & Queen St Primary - £18,000	18,000	
b Corporate Landlord - Review of rates paid and rateable values		
c Review of leasehold payments		
d Increase income re: Land and other charges	3,760	
e Net reduction in Anuerin Leisure Trust management fee	28,000	
e Energy Costs - Reduction in budget due to efficiency savings identified following implementation of RE:FIT		
- Corporate Landlord Buildings	7,240	
- Street lighting	tbd	
4 Growth Strategy	220,000	

Saving Proposal	Low Estimated Achievement	Potential Impact on Post Numbers
a Council Tax - Increase in collection following the removal of the Empty Property Discount	170,000	
b Council Tax Income	50,000	
5 Industrial Portfolio Review - Review of service charges and insurance to pass onto Tenants - Increase income through Investment of capital funding to upgrade units	100,000	
6 Commercial Waste Service review - implementation 1/4/2020	23,000	
7 Low Carbon Removal of the Carbon Reduction Commitment Budget	138,000	
8 Work Place Transformation Cost reduction Measures - ICT Budget - Rationalising systems - Managing Suppliers - Review of printing, scanners, postage etc - Review of telephony	50,000	
9 Income Recovery Review of Income Recovery activities	54,000	2.00
TOTAL POTENTIAL SAVINGS	1,465,000	-
TOTAL ACHIEVEMENT	1,465,000	

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY -BASED ON THE PROVISIONAL SETTLEMENT

	2020/2021 £	2021/2022 £	2022/2023 £	2023/2024 £	2024/2025 £
Draft Expenditure					
Draft Estimates	147,307	152,528	158,200	160,070	159,799
Grants transferred in	1,122	1,122	1,122	1,122	1,122
Revenue Grants	22,170	22,170	22,170	22,170	22,170
Assumed Savings	0	179	(2,324)	(4,524)	(2,694)
Cost Pressures / Growth	2,046	529	1,000	1,000	1,000
Adjusted Draft Budget	172,645	176,528	180,168	179,838	181,397
Funding					
AEF	116,064	116,064	116,064	116,064	116,064
Council Tax	34,590	35,970	37,410	38,910	40,465
Revenue Grants	22,170	22,170	22,170	22,170	22,170
Total Funding	172,824	174,204	175,644	177,144	178,699
Funding Gap / (Surplus)	(179)	2,324	4,524	2,694	2,698
Contribution to reserves	200	200	200	200	200
Adjusted Funding Gap / (Surplus)	21	2,524	4,724	2,894	2,898

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Agenda Item 20

Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: Council

Date of Meeting: **6th February, 2020**

Report Subject: **Memberships Report**

Portfolio Holder: **Executive Member – Corporate Services**

Report Submitted by: **Democratic Services**

Report Written by: **Democratic Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
							6/02/20	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To present a list of Memberships for consideration and determination by Members of the Council.

2. Scope

2.1 ANEURIN BEVAN COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL

To appoint a replacement representative for Councillor Julie Holt on the above.

ADVISORY PANEL FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY GOVERNORS

- (a) To ratify the following appoints made at the panel meeting held on 17th December, 2019:-

Ebbw Fawr Learning Community – Councillor D. Davies
Rhos y Fedwyn Primary – Councillor Phil Edwards
Tredegar Comprehensive – Councillor Haydn Trollope
Willowtown Primary School – Ms Sian Barrett

- (b) To receive a verbal update following the further panel meeting held on the 31st January, 2020.

3. Options for Recommendation

- 3.1 To consider the above.

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